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Self Sufficient Sailor

Completely Revised and Expanded



Third Edition

***The Self
Sufficient
Sailor***

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The Self Sufficient Sailor

***THIRD EDITION
FULLY REVISED AND EXPANDED***

Lin and Larry Pardey



Arcata, California USA
and Kawau Island, New Zealand

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*To Larry—no one could have been a better
or more loving guide to sailing and seamanship*

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

About the Revised Third Edition

Introduction to the First Edition of Self-Sufficient Sailor

SECTION I

How Can I Do It?

- Hitchhiking across Oceans
- Finding Crew to Help You Cross Oceans From the Skipper's Point of View
- Go Now, Pay on the Way
- Yacht Deliveries
- Thirty Feet Is Enough

SECTION II

How Can I Handle It?

- Under Sail without an Engine
- Be Prepared to Use Your Sail Power

SECTION III

Cruising Is a Sharing Proposition

- It Could be Worth Your Life to Teach Your Wife (or Partner)
- The Mate You Scare Could Be Your Own

- 10** The People You Meet

SECTION IV

The Nuts and Bolts of Cruising - Simplicity Works

- 11** Tools and Spares for Offshore Voyagers
12 Sculling or Rowing, Oar Power Works
13 Build Your Own Bulwarks

SECTION V

Being Prepared Is the Name of the Game

- 14** Make Your Cruising Drag Free
15 The Self-sufficient Sailor's Emergency Abandon Ship Kit
16 Staying on Board
17 Priorities for Safe Offshore Voyaging

SECTION VI

Details That Can Make Your Yacht More Efficient, Simpler, and Easier to Maintain

- 18** Rudders for Cruising
19 Plumbing Ideas
20 The Cruising Mainsail
21 The Instant Whisker-Spinnaker Pole
22 The Truth about Windvanes
23 Handy Headsail Dowsing
24 Idle Wooden Boats Make for Rotten Hulls
25 A Near-fatal Bit of Carelessness
26 The Indispensables

- 27** Winter Projects for a Cool Summer

SECTION VII

Cruising Isn't Easy

- 28** The Curse of Cruising
29 Cruising, Guns, Pirates, and Thieves
30 The Case against the Well-Planned Cruise
31 The Wave that Was Waiting for Bill Bailey

SECTION VIII

Cape Horn and Beyond - The Learning Never Stops

- 32** Cape Horn to Starboard
33 Preparing for Cape Horn
34 Volcanoes South to Volcanoes North - Chasing the Demon Schedule
35 Halfway Point

SECTION IX

The Next Stages of a Voyaging Life

- 36** Lessons Cruising Taught Me
37 Transition
38 Compromise
39 If It Was Easy...

Afterword

About the Author

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Eben Bryns, *Taleisin*'s current owner, provided detail photographs of the boat for this edition as well as letting me come on board whenever I wished to remind myself of details that I might have forgotten.

Our thanks also go to all of the warm, friendly sailors we've met everywhere we've been. It was with them that we discussed the questions about cruising, sailing, and boat maintenance that eventually led to each of these chapters.



Note: *Though the majority of articles in this book are written by me (Lin), until recently, many of the ideas came from hours of discussion with Larry. So much so that by the time the words were finally smoothed out onto paper I sometimes had trouble remembering who first proposed which idea. However, sometimes Larry felt strongly about some aspect of our sailing life and took over as primary writer. His writing style is quite different from mine. Just like Larry, it is succinct and practical where I sometimes tend to wax lyrical.*

Larry, due to his advancing illness, is not able to work alongside me on this edition. As I worked on this project I realized several of the chapters carry his distinctive voice. To preserve this, I have decided to leave them unchanged other than to update information where possible. I have also indicated these chapters with an introductory note in order to honor Larry, and to save any confusion over the distinct change of writing style.

About the Revised Third Edition



Larry and I were living in an isolated mountain cottage, sans electricity, sans running water, sans telephones as we built *Seraffyn*'s bigger sister, *Taleisin*. To help pay for her construction we began writing the first edition of this book. Almost four decades have now passed; we finished building *Taleisin*, then cruised more than 85,000 miles in her, including a westward circumnavigation via four of the great southern capes. We continued to work along the way, writing, delivering several yachts, restoring or repairing classic yachts in various countries, and adding a solar panel to *Taleisin* so we could make videos. We also began presenting seminars every few years. These seminars gave us a chance to meet and encourage hundreds of potential cruisers. I think I gained as much as the attendees did. As I listened to the questions, the fears these potential voyagers expressed, I gained new ideas for the articles and books that came after *The Self-Sufficient Sailor*.

Larry and I voyaged onward for almost 29 years after the first edition of this book was written. And as we continued to sail, we never seemed to run out of lessons to learn, nor places we wanted to visit or revisit.

We stopped voyaging only when Parkinson's disease began to steal Larry's physical ability to move around on a boat. His advancing illness meant I had a seven-year hiatus from sailing and crossing oceans. Then, just over two years ago, another major change came into my life. I resumed going to sea, this time on a highly different but nonetheless relatively simply outfitted vessel, albeit one with an engine, roller furling gear and refrigeration.¹ I have had to learn a lot of new skills to sail on this boat and to work alongside a different partner.

There have also been a lot of changes for potential cruisers since the first edition of this book. Where in the 1980s a 40-footer was considered a large cruising boat, today people are being lured into thinking they need 50- or 55-, even 60-footers to go cruising. For this reason, a lot of people have come to feel that cruising is only for the wealthy or at least those who have retired and can live off the proceeds of homes that have grown in value through the years. To further inflate the potential costs to get out cruising, there are now ten times the number of safety items offered "off the shelf," with pressures applied to make sailors feel they might be somehow remiss if they don't buy and carry each and every one. There are far more cruising guides, far more cruising rallies, and probably more cruisers out there to potentially crowd the wonderful places where once people could sail to on their own.

Fortunately, change is not interfering with the ability to find special cruising adventures along the way. Year after year, the vast majority of people choose to stick to the same routes, to visit the same favorite ports. Much of the "need to have" equipment I see on boats today does not work as well as expected, which means frequent stops in towns and cities for repairs, replacements, or complete refits see a lot of today's cruisers frustrated that they don't have time to visit islands they have dreamed of. For those with leisurely timetables and a willingness to go only 30 or 40 miles off the beaten track, there are still wonderful, less-visited places to explore, spots where local people are eager to invite new friends into their lives.

The sea doesn't change at all. It is still a highway to wonderful new adventures—a place where, if you are prepared and willing to be occasionally uncomfortable, you can feel as if you are in control of your own life, your own destiny. But because the sea never changes, the message in this book is doubly important during a time when so many people offer electrical and mechanical devices as answers to all of the potential problems you could encounter out cruising. The key to successful voyaging today is the same as it always has been: self-sufficiency.

That is why I have chosen to revise and expand this book. Although everything Larry and I wrote and included in the original two editions of *Self-Sufficient Sailor* is still valid, a few chapters in the first and second editions reflect a time before solar panels existed, a time when oil lamps were the only valid option for lighting if the engine or electrical system failed. I have also deleted some chapters which dealt with how to make simple but useful gear that was unavailable back then but is now easily available off the shelf. To cruise is to learn. Thus I have added almost a dozen new chapters, reflecting lessons learned over the later years of voyaging with Larry, and more recently with a new skipper.

All of the original chapters have been updated, in many cases extensively so. I would estimate 55 percent of the material in this edition is published in book form for the very first time. Thus, there is enough brand new material and new lessons that it will, I hope, be worthwhile reading for those who have already enjoyed the previous editions.

This volume is not a complete guide to everything you should know to get out cruising. Larry and I once discussed the idea of creating a "Cruisers' Handbook." But as we concluded then, and I still maintain now, cruising is such a broad subject, and people head into the adventure from so many different backgrounds and go for so many different reasons, it would truly be impossible to answer everyone's questions in one tome. "Let's just share what we know, what we have learned along the way," Larry suggested. "If we can give potential cruisers some guidelines by showing them the mistakes we still make, the lessons we keep learning, we are providing the tools so they can figure out the answers themselves."

I hope you find some answers and new ideas in this fully updated and expanded 3rd edition, along with encouragement to stop dreaming and get sailing. Cruising has never been easy, and it still isn't. But for those who make the break, who learn to be self-sufficient, it is still highly rewarding.

1 See [chapter 39](#) called 'If It Was Easy...' for more on this transition in my personal life.

Introduction to the First Edition of Self-Sufficient Sailor



Note: I have included this original introduction, written by Larry almost 40 years ago, as it explains the genesis of the book you now hold in your hand. –Lin Pardey

About a month after we arrived in the Gulf Islands of British Columbia, we met a delightful sailing enthusiast. We'd been enjoying meandering from cove to cove among the hundreds of islands while we recovered from the mental and cultural shock of our forty-nine-day North Pacific crossing. As soon as we dropped our anchor in front of his house, Greg came out to invite us in for a drink of hot chocolate next to his fireplace.

Late the next afternoon, the three of us took a short sail around the island and, as the September day drew to a nippy close, Lin went below to

warm up the cabin while Greg and I sailed into the bay, set the anchor, and furled *Seraffyn*'s sails.

When we climbed below, Lin had hot fresh bread ready, along with bowls full of thick French onion soup with gobs of baked cheese on top. The stereo was playing an Andrés Segovia tape, one of my favorites. The oil lamps kept the cabin warm and cheerful. I urged Greg to settle back into what I call my lotus position—back against the bulkhead, legs up on the settee, elbow on the table. He relaxed, swung his feet up, and, after commenting on the easy way our gravity water system let Lin fill the tea kettle for another round of hot buttered rum, asked, “I hope you don’t mind me being personal, but how do you do it? How have you been able to afford to live like this for the past ten years? How does *Seraffyn* look so organized even though you’ve gone over 40,000 miles on her?”

Both Lin and I tried to answer at the same time: “We’ve kept our overhead down by trying to simplify everything.” We’d been asked this same question probably five hundred times in thirty-two different countries. We’d been asked through Japanese, Polish, Russian, Spanish, and Finnish translators. We’d tried to answer it in articles for various yachting magazines over the previous five years.

After I rowed Greg home, Lin and I spent several hours trying to figure out how to put the answer clearly and concisely on paper. We discussed the fact that *Seraffyn* had never had a gear failure, that in spite of working only three or four months a year we were financially sound, and that we still looked forward to more cruising together. “If you want to sum it up,” Lin said, “we’ve tried every way we can to become a self-sufficient team.”

But that’s too pat an answer. I suggested thinking about some of the articles we’d written that caused interesting comments from people we met in our wanderings. A common thread seemed to run through the most popular ones: choosing and outfitting your boat to make it simpler and easier to maintain and learning to be comfortable with cruising, with being at sea. In the end Lin and I decided the best answer to Greg’s question, and to those of hundreds of good friends *Seraffyn* has helped us make, would be

this book, a collection of several of our most popular older articles and some new ones.

This is our answer to the couple or young sailor who earns just an average salary in today's changeable, rushing society. If you want to do more than dream of taking six months, a year, or a whole lifetime to go wandering, we hope this book gives you some of the clues that help you become a self-sufficient sailor.



GUARANTEE

Not one of the ideas expressed in this book is new, original, or very clever. Each one comes from sailors we've met in one or another of three hundred ports around the world. Each idea has been tested at sea by us and several other sailors. So we know they work.



SECTION I

How Can I Do It?

First comes the idea. Slowly it develops into a dream. Then come the doubts. How do I get the experience to see if I really want to do this? What if I need crew? How do I pay for this? How do I get a boat I can afford? Read on and you will find—young or mature, rich or budget-minded—there are many different ways to kickstart your dream.

1

Hitchhiking across Oceans



It's May and the bulletin boards in Opuia, New Zealand, are sprouting signs: "Crew needed for passage to Vanuatu" or Fiji or Tonga; in Gibraltar the signs are likely to say "Charter boat seeks deck hand and/or cook"; in ports like St. Georges, Bermuda, or around the Annapolis waterfront folks have posted, "Willing crew available to go anywhere" or "Couple seeking passage toward England." These messages proliferate on waterfront notice boards and on the Internet. If you know where to look, you'll find boat owners and crews worldwide trying to connect for daysailing, racing and voyages, both coastal and oceanic. Sailing websites, forums and sailing magazines have whole columns of crew positions in their classified advertising sections. Winter is coming somewhere, be it in the southern or northern hemisphere and people want to head for warmer climes. Charter boats need crew. Delivery skippers need crew. Cruising boats without self-steering vanes need crew. Couples with children would like an extra person on board for long passages. Singlehanders tired of being alone need crew.

Surveys taken by various sailing entities indicate that at any one time there are up to 10,000 boats actively out cruising. The majority are owned

by couples who may not need extra crew on board. But many singlehanders and others who prefer having an extra hand to share watches are looking for someone to help them sail across the next ocean. When they first set out on their dream cruise they were able to fill their crew ranks with friends and relatives looking for a few weeks' holidays. But as the friends and relatives use up their free time or run out of spare funds, the owners begin looking elsewhere. Few are willing to pay for professional crew. That means crewing positions become available for would-be wanderers.

We've personally met several hundred people who hitchhike across oceans. It can be a great way to travel and will introduce you to a whole new way of life. It will also give you good practical information for that day when you buy or build your own cruising boat. When we delivered a 50-ton ketch from Palma, Mallorca, to New Orleans, one of our crew was a delightful twenty-three-year-old New Yorker who had just spent six months backpacking in Europe and wanted to save his air fare home. Another friend, Phin, took a crew-woman to cook on his 60-foot schooner for the voyage from Tahiti toward Singapore. Then he married her in Bali five months later and we met them a year after that on their way through the Mediterranean. More recently we caught up and found their marriage had lasted through that voyage and into a shared boatyard venture when they finished circumnavigating.

Not all crewing positions work out this well. Some turn into near nightmare situations. But with some planning and care this could be a great way to gain experience and also to have a look around at boats that might become your key to full-time cruising.

How can you find these crew positions? The Internet is one place to start hunting. Type "crew on a cruising yacht" into the search engine and sites like crewseekers.net, crewbay.com, lovesail.com, sailingnetworks.com pop up. Most of these list not only positions for long-distance voyages but also positions for getting out on the water at local sailing clubs. Don't pass up these local opportunities: the more sailing time you have under your belt, the more attractive you appear to the owners of offshore cruising boats. Just as important, your onshore one-day-at-a-time experiences could help you

evaluate the skipper you might want to join later, on a voyage where you could be thrown together for weeks at a time. And, you will have the knowledge to judge the seaworthiness of the boat you are being asked to help take across an ocean.

Potential cruising positions are also listed in many sailing magazines, both their printed and their online editions. One of the most successful crew/owner matchmaking magazines we know of is *Latitude 38*, which devotes a whole issue to crewfinding and hosts a huge party each year in California just for this purpose. I have also met several people who found excellent crewing positions by purchasing a classified advert in *Cruising World* magazine.

But probably the most successful way to get crewing positions is by actually going to ports in the sunshine belt or places where sailors stop to refit or restock before they set off across oceans: Gibraltar or Palma de Mallorca from April to June if you want to head eastward into the Mediterranean; Malta, Rhodes, and Piraeus are good places to find boats headed westward through the Med. For a trip across the Atlantic, look in Gibraltar, Palma de Mallorca, or Tenerife in the Canary Islands from October to January. Antigua, Barbados, St. Thomas, and Puerto Rico abound with open crew spots during October and November. Panama is a good place to look anytime of the year, but for westbound rides May is a popular month, and October to December works for heading into the Caribbean as no one wants to be there during the hurricane season. In San Diego and other Southern California ports, look for boats headed toward Mexico during October and November. In Baja California and Mexico, starting in February you might find crewing positions on boats headed south along the mainland and then out into the South Pacific. Otherwise, in late March you can often pick up crewing positions on boats headed from Cabo San Lucas towards Tahiti. Tahiti can be a good place to look for boats heading westward through the Pacific islands or north toward Hawaii around July 14 each year. Opuia or Whangerei on the North Island of New Zealand in late April, and Singapore and Honolulu are other places well worth a try. The best months depend on which way you wish to go.

Wherever charter boats congregate for the off-season, you might pick up an interesting job: Miami, San Francisco, Long Beach, San Diego, Auckland, New Zealand, Antibes, France. In Honolulu in June, boats are delivered back to the US mainland, in October, boats are moved from the Med to the Caribbean.

Charter companies in remote areas like Raiatea in French Polynesia and Nuku'alofa in Tonga often asked us if we knew of good crew or cooks we could recommend. They offer only US\$40 or \$50 a day plus room and board, but you can gain invaluable experience working with these charter boats and when their season ends could probably pick up a good berth for further voyaging.

You'll some need money to find and enjoy a good crew position on a boat that is headed offshore. If you sign up for a position you find online, you'll need funds to get to the boat's location. For those who choose to head to a departure port and do their search in person, it's unwise and usually difficult to find the position you want without spending two or three weeks looking in each port. In fact, the most successful potential crewmembers have the money to move to another country or another port, as their quest demands. How much money you need depends on your tastes. In Spain or other Mediterranean countries, you'll need a minimum of US\$50 a day to live meagerly and have shelter over your head. Though you will have lower overheads once you find a berth, there will still be some expenses. Few people are willing to take on a crewmember without asking them to share in food costs. You'll definitely need money for drinks or dinners ashore, a new pair of sandals, a few books, or souvenirs. Based on discussions we've had with people crewing on long-distance cruising boats, US\$450 to \$600 a month will usually prove enough once you are on board.

The most important expense anyone becoming a crewmember must plan for is what we call the "Crewmember's Insurance Fund." This is a minimum of US\$1,500 that is put aside in such a way that you can't easily spend it. This money is for airfare home from the farthest place you are likely to reach. It is really important and could mean the difference between having a fine adventure and quitting cruising for life. If you have this

insurance fund, you won't feel forced to take any berth that comes along just because you are broke. If you happen to choose unwisely and end up as crew on a boat full of problems, you will have the financial security to move on or to say to the skipper, "Hey, let's try to straighten this situation out." Being trapped on an unhappy cruising boat because you are too broke to fly out could be worse than being in prison.

One way of extending your funds while you look for a good berth is to offer your services as a varnisher, painter, or general handyman on any large yacht in the harbor, either power or sail. It's rare when you can't find one that needs a hand. Usually you'll be offered a bunk and meals for a few hours of labor each day. Sometimes you'll be offered some cash as well. Not only will this save you money, but it will put you in a ringside seat where you can get first-hand information on which boats are going where. You will also be earning yourself a valuable recommendation. I know we chose the crew we mentioned earlier for that delivery to New Orleans because Malcolm Horsley, the skipper on *Stormvogel*, a 75-footer being refitted in Palma, told us, "Richard has been living with us for two weeks. He's easy to be around, works hard at anything we ask him to do, and cleans up after himself." We picked Richard from among four potential crew based on this recommendation.

As you consider the various berths available to you, remember that you will be living with these people twenty-four hours a day—working, eating, sleeping, putting up with bad weather, and playing within 20 or 30 feet of each other for weeks on end. You'll be putting your life in the hands of the skipper. So it pays to learn enough beforehand to judge not only the qualifications of the skipper, but the seaworthiness of his boat (one of the reasons we recommend getting out sailing locally before you decide to hitchhike across oceans.) Don't just trust your instinct—take the time to ask around for recommendations. If crew is leaving, find out why. It may be a simple personality conflict, time for the crew to go home to a job or school, or time for him or her to move on to a more exciting position on another

yacht. But there may be more serious reasons. A friend of ours became tired of singlehanded sailing and jumped at the berth that was offered to him by a husband and wife sailing with their long-limbed, blue-eyed eighteen-year-old daughter. Bill had met the young Costa Rican that had crewed on this family's 40-foot sloop during the previous three months, but he had never thought to ask Jose why he was leaving. Bill sold his 25-foot Folkboat and sailed off as crew, bound for the Caribbean. Pretty soon he learned the truth. The family was broke. So he loaned them first US\$500, then another \$500, with their reassurances that he would be paid back "as soon as we reach Miami when the whole family will be going back to work." After three months the family owed him several thousand dollars—in fact all the money he'd received for his Folkboat. When he stopped the cash flow the family made life unbearable and finally kicked him off the boat in Colombia, South America. Bill never recovered his money. But as he told us later, "I never thought to ask anyone about that family. Turns out, Jose had had the same problem; that's why he left. Not only that, but they bragged to me about all the shipyard bills they'd skipped out on." A bit of quiet investigation at the local chandleries or shipyards and among the cruising fleet could have prevented this awful experience.

I was walking into Corfu, Greece, when I met an Australian who had responded to a newspaper advertisement and joined a 38-foot yacht bound directly for the Mediterranean. "I'd sailed dinghies before," James told me, "but nothing prepared me for the last 10,000 miles. We worked like dogs for a week to get ready. Then we had 31 days at sea. Arrived in Djibouti and spent two weeks repairing the boat. Set off up the Red Sea, 18 days without stopping. One day off in Suez; ten days sailing to Greece. Hell! What's the fun of it all: work, sail, work, sail?" I could sympathize with James. He'd made the mistake of hitching a ride on a delivery job. Unless you are in a real hurry to cross an ocean or love ocean passages, it's much more fun to find a berth on a yacht that plans a leisurely cruise along shores with inviting harbors. For the first-time crewman, James's statement really summed it up: "Crewing on an ocean passage before I ever had a chance to

learn about casual cruising has turned me off. It's back to dinghy sailing for me."

If you prefer the idea of doing day-hops and lots of sightseeing, consider signing on as crew for a charter yacht which offers day charters or one-week charters. Often the skippers can offer a small amount of payment, though this could be as low as US\$40 a day while preparing for charters and \$80 a day while the boat is actually on charter. Lots of good positions are available, but crewing on a charter yacht is a full-time, demanding job. Zillah, who worked as stewardess on the luxurious 60-foot wishbone schooner *Carina*, agrees: "It's like working in a hotel that goes to windward. I get up at 0600 when we are on charter and fall asleep exhausted at 2300. If all goes well I get three hours free in the afternoon. Between charters we have to work full-time keeping up the varnish, refueling, and buying stores. Some of the people who charter the boat are real pains. One lady actually expected me to hand-wash her undies. But most are fantastic fun. I work as stewardess each summer on *Carina* because I love the boat, I enjoy working with the skipper, and I'd rather be out in the sun and wind at coolies' wages than cooped up in an office in London."

If you want a charter-boat job, consider taking one or two of the courses offered for superyacht crew, courses such as safety training, first aid, and superyacht deckhand. Many are offered online. The certificate you get could show a potential skipper that you are keen. It also helps the skipper with insurance matters. Do you need these certificates? Possibly not. We were walking around the Auckland waterfront just a few months ago (end of 2018) looking at the five huge yachts moored there when we spotted a tidy Contessa 26 tied astern of one. Then we heard a shout from the young man working in a big tender, washing down the sides of a 150-footer. Turns out he was a singlehanded sailor we'd met before. He had no training but he confirmed the most important thing that helped him land a job (and a mooring spot for his boat): he started looking at least two months before the charter season started. Competition is keen, and skippers always

need help with the spring refit. Preferential treatment will go to the potential crewmember who has been around to help with some of the dirty work.

A word of warning: Pierhead Jumpers (PHJs) are an unpopular breed of potential crew. They search around, promising to crew on four or five different yachts, then make up their minds an hour before departure time. This way the Pierhead Jumper avoids the tedious pre-departure work involved in preparing for any voyage. The PHJ is cheating both himself and his future sailing mates. He doesn't have time to learn about the seaworthiness and set up of the ship he's sailing on. Since the PHJ hasn't helped buy any provisions and store them away, he is always asking, "Where is the so-and-so? Where do I put such-and-such?" until he is resented by everyone on board. Working and living together on a sailing boat, no matter what its size, requires teamwork and understanding. So spend a week or two with your potential sailing partners—checking over the boat, splicing some new halyards, buying one more set of spare batteries, wrapping another five dozen tomatoes, lashing down one last can of water—to give yourself an idea of the personalities on board.

Of course there is the obverse of this—skippers taking advantage of potential crew. I have met crew who were told by potential skippers, "If you help me get ready to go, you've got yourself a crewing position." Then they spend weeks, or even months working alongside the skipper only to realize the dream will never get off the dock. Some research before you sign on will help you avoid this problem. But if the boat is in a marina where others are departing to head off cruising, a few weeks spent helping out might put you in the right place to find the ride you are seeking.

It is hard to say whether couples looking for crewing positions have as much luck as single people. I know that when we want two crew for a long-distance delivery job we are reluctant to hire a couple. We figure that if one or the other of the couple doesn't work out, we are liable to lose our whole crew at the next port. On the other hand, a husband and wife on a cruising boat are likely to prefer the social benefits of a couple when it's time to take on crew for an ocean crossing.

Once you've found a potential berth on a boat bound for adventure, there are a few tips that can help make your life afloat more pleasurable for everyone involved. If at all possible, ask the skipper if you could get out on a sea-trial or short voyage that lasts one or two nights. This gives both you and the skipper a chance to see if you are a good fit. It also lets you see if the boat is well-found and ready for an ocean passage.

Now you are on board, it is really important to remember that whatever the outward appearance of the boat, whatever its size, every yacht is its owner's pride and joy. You'll only create resentment by saying, "The last 40-foot ketch I sailed on had a better set of winches than this one" or "If this was a sloop instead of a schooner we could go to windward like the 38-footer my friend Bill crews on." Yacht owners are particularly sensitive to any possible slight to their boat or seamanship. In fact the main reason people own yachts and go off cruising is to gain the freedom to do things their own way. So it pays to take an interest in how the skipper handles the boat. Notice how he cleats his halyards and jib sheets. Coil lines the way she does and use the same kind of knots to tie off the sail covers, even if your way seems better.

If you are new to sailing or are hitching your first rides on long-distance passages, take a keen interest in learning to sail the boat and to navigate. You can pick up useful skills that you may use later. Larry learned celestial navigation and wire splicing during his first ocean passage, a voyage from Newport Beach, California, to Honolulu and back as pick-up crew on an 85-foot schooner. He also learned some neat rope work from the skipper, Bob Sloan, who was a master rigger. Even more so, it may be life-saving skills you acquire. Skippers can't help but feel flattered when you ask them to teach you to read a chart or check over the engine. Then if an emergency does occur, or if the skipper becomes too ill to handle things, the minutes you spent studying will pay off.

There is almost nowhere in the world where a sense of humor is more necessary than in the close confines of an ocean-passage-making sailboat.

We were on a delivery from Miami to Puerto Rico with a new 37-foot motorsailer—a production boat that kept surprising us with new bits of gear that failed and rigging that wasn't up to the job. The diesel quit because the injection pump was jammed with fiberglass dust left in the bonded-in fuel tanks during construction. We proceeded into the Atlantic toward San Salvador under sail, 40-knot squalls making each watch a wet miserable two hours. Heavy spray flew across the central cockpit. There was no helmsman's seat. Yet one statement by our good-humored pick-up crewman saved our tempers: Rod Pringle slid open the hatch and water streamed down his face as he called, "Rise and sparkle, Lin, time for your two-hour Caribbean sunshine cruise." This ability to make light of discomfort is one of the main reasons we were eager to give Rod a letter of recommendation in case he ever again wanted another job as crew.

If you know you've done a good job on the yacht you are leaving, don't be shy about asking for a recommendation. The fact that you had the foresight to do so could impress future skippers. It will also serve as proof of your experience and sea time if you eventually want to get a superyacht crewing ticket or take the examinations for a US Coast Guard 100-ton ticket, a New Zealand Yacht Masters Offshore Ticket, or the Royal Yachting Association Yachtmaster's certificate.

Women are joining the offshore crew market in larger numbers each year. They have one extra problem to contend with. I have heard several stories about boat owners who say, "Don't worry; you are just crew, separate cabin, no romantic nonsense"—then 200 miles out these same skippers change their tune. Before you leave terra firma as the only woman on board, it pays to have lived on board with the skipper and possibly to have made a few short voyages together. As an aside, one of my favorite stories on this subject: successful California business man, influenced no doubt by visions of a Playboy adventure, advertised for an all-woman crew for his 46-footer. He offered to pay expenses including return airfare. From almost 60 applications he chose 5 handsome young women. We met this merry crew when they were out for just two months—couldn't have found a more satisfied appearing crew. Nine months later we met again. Four of the

women were departing, disappointed to be asked to leave but satisfied with the friendships and fun they'd experienced. Skipper came over to tell us things hadn't worked as he'd planned. Seems the women formed a union, agreeing none would cozy up to the skipper as that would cause tensions, ruin the whole adventure. "Not one real cuddle," the skipper said, "let alone anything more. I came to like all five, but Beth is the one for me." He and Beth married a few years later and are enjoying sailing and skiing together still, 20 years later.

Male or female, anyone joining a yacht as crew owes it to him- or herself to make sure of the financial, social, and labor details before setting sail. If it's a sharing-expenses arrangement, get down on paper exactly what expenses will be shared. Normally, shared expenses include food and fuel, but not engine repairs or boat upkeep. If your deal is different, make sure it is *clear* beforehand. If you are lucky enough to land a paying job, write out the wages expected and the jobs you'll generally be expected to do. Discuss details such as shipboard entertainment. Find out about who finances nights ashore and if you like an occasional drink, ask permission to bring a few bottles of your own liquor on board. If the owner or captain prefers a dry ship, that's his prerogative. But if cocktail hour in port is a custom on board, having your own bottle to share will make everyone happier. While you are discussing the conditions of your crew job, find out which bunk you'll have and what gear you'll need besides foul weather gear, boots, PFD, and harness of your own. Ask if the ship has spare bedding or if you should bring a sleeping bag. Determine who will pay your fare home if you are on a delivery job and whether that means just air fare or bus fare to the airport also. Go off somewhere and write a list of all these details; then go over the written list with your prospective skipper. Give him a printed and signed copy of your list of agreements so he can refer to it later if necessary. I know it's hard to talk these affairs out and get them down on paper when you are eager to go off on the new adventure that is an ocean passage. But it is harder still to heal the breaches made because you weren't clear on the deal before you signed on as crew.

With the proliferation of larger, so-called superyachts, more paying jobs have become available for those who have some experience and a willingness to work hard. These jobs are rarely available on a temporary basis but if you are in the right place at the right time—places like Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Antibes, France; or Palma de Mallorca—just when a superyacht is preparing to set sail, you could get lucky. Or, you could apply for a superyacht job well in advance by looking at one of the crewing sites listed at workonayacht.com/index.php/resources/crew-agencies/.

Whether you just want a free trip home from Europe, a cruise to Tahiti, or the chance to gather experience toward becoming a full-time professional yacht skipper, stewardess, or mate, the sunshine belt is the place to look. Conservatively speaking, I can think of 60 different crewing positions that were available in Malta alone during one winter. And Malta is just one of a dozen fitting-out ports. Do a bit of research, gather some money ahead, and join the wonderful world of offshore sailing the least expensive way there is: as a crew on an oceangoing yacht.

2

Finding Crew to Help You Cross Oceans

From the Skipper's Point of View



“I was dreaming of sailing to Vanuatu when I bought this boat,” Brian told me. “Spent the past two years outfitting it, sailing it all around the Hauraki Gulf. Came to realize I am not willing to cross an ocean on my own. Been looking for a girlfriend who likes sailing but...”

We were sharing drinks at the Kawau Boating Club near my New Zealand home base. I’d mentioned my desire to get offshore one more time. I agreed with Brian: singlehanding on passages is not something I’d enjoy. I’d worry about getting enough sleep to make good decisions. I’d worry because there was no one watching for shipping, for squalls, for other sailors who might send up distress signals. I’d miss having someone to share the experience. “How about putting an advert here at the club?” I suggested as another friend showed up to join us and the conversation turned elsewhere.

A year later Brian’s words came back to me. I was on a voyage to the fiords of southern New Zealand in early 2018 as crew on board *Sahula*, a 40-foot Van de Stadt cutter owned by an Australian singlehander, David Haigh.

He had been voyaging for ten years and was just a few thousand miles from completing a circumnavigation which had started in Townsville, Australia. During this time David had had various crew he picked up along the way, crew who were on board for up to three months at a time. Despite being a singlehander for large parts of his voyage, David never crossed an ocean by himself. A few months later, while we were waiting for a break the weather at Doubtful Sound, Fiordland, I met Ralph Robe-Curry, an Australian with extensive cruising experience. He had five pick-up crew with him on *Bomoh*, his S&S 52-foot sloop. Each of these skippers had different ways of selecting their crew, different ways of handling the finances and voyage details. But each agreed: being a single sailor should not be used as an excuse to put off cruising.

Only one obstacle lay in the way when, at 60 years of age, David retired from his job as a Senior Law Lecturer in Townsville, Queensland, with the dream of heading off on a voyage. That obstacle was his three daughters who worried about him setting off completely on his own. “That is the primary reason I made sure I had crew on board for passages,” he told me. For the first year of his cruise, along the coast of Australia and onward towards Indonesia, David had a full roster of friends and family members who were interested in joining him for a few weeks at a time. Airfares to and from their homes were quite affordable, distances and the time required to travel to and from the boat relatively short. But as he ventured further afield, fewer of his friends could take the time to join him, unless it was for two or three weeks to a destination they were eager to explore. Furthermore, David was reluctant to plan an exact itinerary, instead preferring to be open to spur-of-the-moment destination changes—not something that works well for friends back home. People with jobs need to have exact dates and destinations well in advance to book flights and organize holiday time. And few have the flexibility of time frames needed to cross oceans. So, David found it necessary to get what I call “pick-up” crew.



Though *Sahula* is rigged for singlehanded sailing, David Haigh found pick up crew were a helpful and pleasurable addition for ocean passages.

“It was easy. I asked my three daughters to canvas their Facebook friends and if that didn’t turn up someone, I just posted a note at the local backpacker’s accommodation. I enjoyed having young, eager people with me,” David stated as he described his preferred crew. “I liked them to have no sailing experience. That way I could teach them to do things the way I prefer. I promised them they would have enough knowledge by the time we crossed an ocean to sail their own boat or be really good crew for someone else.”

On board *Sahula*, David took on only one crewman per voyage. This crew was expected to pay for half the food expenses, plus half of marina and

fuel costs. Shopping was done jointly so crew could add any special treats they wanted to have on board. “I wasn’t taking crew along to finance my voyage, just to stand watches and be company. But I must admit, by splitting some of the expenses, my trip up the Danube River from the Black Sea and on through the canals of Eastern Europe was financially easier than it would have been if I paid for it all on my own.”



Charlie Priestley, an outdoor pursuit specialist and shark diver, flew from the UK when she was offered a chance to sail through Polynesia. She rejoined *Sahula* a year later to explore New Zealand's Fiordland.



I realized why David enjoyed having young pick-up crew when I signed on to sail around New Zealand on board *Sahula* with him and Charlie.

As for the actual accounting, David asked the crew to keep track of the expenses, compute the division, but he never asked to see the accounting. “I wanted them to feel I trusted them. They told me they were amazed I was so easy going,” he said. “But I think it worked out well as they seemed to go out of their way to be even-handed.”

Crew were given the complete forepeak with a V berth which could be made into a large wall-to-wall berth. There are doors to shut this area off from the rest of the accommodation. Spare foul weather gear and PFDs were available on board. Crew were expected to share cooking and galley cleaning. Other than standing watches, crew were not expected to pitch in with boat jobs, but most willingly did. No alcohol was served at sea other than for a very special occasion such as crossing the equator. In port, the cost of an occasional bottle of wine was shared. Absolutely no smokers were invited to sail on *Sahula*.

It was made clear to new crew members that they were expected to share any grievances at 6 p.m. as they joined in evening sundowners. “By setting a definite time for discussions, it seemed to remove any tensions,” David stated. “I also let them know if we got on well, they were welcome to stay on for a few weeks of island-hopping or coastal exploring after we’d completed

the ocean passage, sort of like a reward.” This balanced arrangement between skipper and crew has worked well for David. Happy crew, happy skipper. “But as much as I enjoyed this time,” David added, “I was always pleased to have the boat back to myself when they left.”

During the course of David’s voyage, over 20 different pick-up crew joined *Sahula*, some of them staying on board for up to three months at a time, some returning for another passage. “I’m still in contact with almost all of them. Only had to ask one person to leave and that was in the Galapagos where I ended up with two crew on board. We spent about a week together before we were ready to sail for the Marquesas and one of them just didn’t seem to be able to communicate with me. Fortunately, another skipper was looking for crew. It worked out quite well as the other skipper and his new crew became good friends and are still occasionally sailing together.”

David, with his background as a lawyer and university lecturer, avoided inviting single women to crew. He was too concerned about potential problems. The exception was Charlie Priestley, a longtime friend of his daughter, who was a professional diver (specializing in shark observation) and a keen outdoorsperson. She had learned of his cruising lifestyle and asked to sail with him from Tahiti. David already had crew so he found Charlie a position on another yacht. That cruising couple had two children and wanted help as they voyaged on to Tonga. From there Charlie moved on board *Sahula* to explore Tonga then help with the passage south to New Zealand. She had found a job in New Zealand, working in outdoor pursuits. Six months later, eager to visit one of the most remote areas in the world, she signed back on board *Sahula* to circumnavigate New Zealand. Her total cost for the six-week voyage was approximately US\$400 and included her contributions for food, fuel and a higher than normal number of days in marinas due to inclement weather. Sharing time with her on board made me realize why David felt the young people who joined him were not only helpful but added zest to his voyaging life. It also made me rethink the idea of having an extra person on board to share the load of watch keeping on longer passages.

Another story is that of Ralph, the owner of *Bomoh*, who works and resides in southern Australia. He doesn't voyage full-time but instead heads off for distinct destinations for up to a year at a time. Thus, he has a more organized approach, both towards his cruising plans and towards finding crew. Ralph explained, "I'd done thousands of miles sailing on my own. I began to feel singlehanding presents a lot of unnecessary risks for both me and my yacht. I also came to the conclusion that being a self-reliant sailor is a desirable trait, but it is not degraded by sailing with crew." Ralph had fallen in love with a boat that he knew stretched his budget, one that is not set up for singlehanding. He found having crew on board not only made exploring faraway places safer and more enjoyable but also helped pay toward the expense of offshore cruising. He set a general itinerary several months in advance, then invited five people to join him and pay a set daily sum to cover all onboard expenses including food, marina, and fuel costs. Ralph found this covered his general cruising expenses but left little extra for boat maintenance. His itinerary had to be relatively rigid, including departure dates for each leg of a voyage so people could come along for just part of the voyage if they wished. He allowed for delays due to weather or unexpected boat repairs by adding time in various ports where crew could make relatively easy connections for arrival or onward travel.



Ralph Robe-Curry likes to have a complement of five crew to help him sail *Bomoh*.

Crew were recruited with relative ease through online sites with the more successful being CrewBay and Find-a-Crew. Ralph also told me, “I placed notices at backpacker hostels, bus stops, on power poles, anywhere. This sometimes had instant results. Once, after I’d done a lap of Ushuaia, Patagonia with a wad of “Crew Wanted” notices and Blu Tack, I returned to *Bomoh* to be greeted by a small crowd of potential crew!”

Ralph does specify that sailing experience is not necessary but he also does not specifically look for novices. He also tries to vet crew who might have to fly in from overseas as to their overall suitability, especially for ocean passages. When the crew are novices, he uses a two-person watch to ease people safely into tasks with less stress. This came about after one crewman wanted to leave the boat earlier than planned. “When I asked why,” Ralph told me, “he said he was terrified of being alone at night at sea.”

The daily sum Ralph charged each crew for the voyage around New Zealand including exploring Fiordland and the Marlborough Sounds was Australian \$25 per day (about US\$19.) As this was a daily fee, there was no need for anyone to handle the accounting. It also let the crew budget for their travels in advance. “Expenses ran a bit high on this voyage,” Ralph noted. “Extra time in marinas, higher than normal fuel costs. So I ended up probably \$1,000 out of pocket. But I got to see another place I wouldn’t have explored without crew.”

Bomoh has three separate cabins plus bunks in the main salon. Ralph uses one as his private domain. When we were sharing anchorages, there were two women and three men on board. This might have presented a slight problem as the best bunks were doubles. But fortunately for this crew, two of them struck up an almost immediate romance and after only three weeks of sailing together were planning to continue traveling onward once the voyage was over. Otherwise, Ralph used the “first one on board gets first choice” approach. He said folks rarely had issues with this but having a couple on board did make it a bit easier as they could share the other double cabin more willingly.

Food on board is tasty, simple, but ample. Ralph also has the crew come along to shop for provisions. “That way, if someone really wants to eat steak, they can add that to the basket. Also gives me an idea of what people expect to eat, what special needs they might have. Probably ensures everyone is happy with the menu.” Crew are expected to take turns in the galley and this provides an opportunity to create some special dishes.

David and Ralph are good illustrations of two different approaches to finding crew if you have a boat ready to go but no partner to help you cross oceans, or if you and your partner feel having an extra crew might be desirable for an ocean crossing. Over the past 50 years of voyaging I have seen both of these methods at work. I have also noted one psychological difference, which can cause a hiccup for those who choose to use a financial contribution scheme like Ralph’s. Because the potential crew hands over a set amount of cash when they come on board, they may have expectations, more like a paying client, i.e., complaining if the food served is less fancy

than they expected, or not wanting to pitch in with work on board as readily. When expenses are tallied up along the way then split, on the other hand, the dynamic and expectations change completely. Ralph mentioned this as a problem on board *Bomoh*. He tried to alleviate this by having the crew pay when it suited them, usually at the end of each leg, in hopes of promoting trust and goodwill. "I have had two or three people who thought of themselves as passengers, sitting and doing nothing while the rest of us got underway. Refusing to pitch in when meals were being prepared. And a few did walk away without paying." Because of this, Ralph suggested anyone deciding to use "pick-up" crew also be prepared to handle their boat completely on their own, just in case they have to. But Ralph's overall success rate would be the envy of any business man as he has had only a handful of disappointments among the more than 100 crew who have joined him for voyages around Tasmania, through the southern Islands of Polynesia, and across the South Pacific to the Patagonian Canals, among other destinations.



By taking crew to help defray his cruising costs, Ralph is able to explore distant lands on a boat he truly loves.



Bomoh, a S&S 52-foot sloop, has carried Ralph and his “friends” to the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean.

Bomoh seemed to be a happy ship when we met and spent a few days anchored near each other. My observation was proven correct when, almost a year later I received an email from one of the crew saying, “I’d love to sail with Ralph again. Great skipper, goes out of his way to make it fun for everyone.”

The two skippers I came to know in Fiordland had quite different personalities—Ralph being very gregarious, David more reticent. But they share traits that made their pick-up crew experiences work well on board both vessels. Both really enjoy being with people at sea and onshore; both have a willingness to share their space with strangers, and to accept that someone’s annoying habits might only show up once they have been on board for a day or two.

Their experiences have been amazingly successful. Ralph, like David, keeps in touch with many of his previous crew. When I asked both of these men to review this manuscript, they each suggested I include two final items: taking on couples as crew can be a problem and having a woman on board changes the whole dynamic of a cruise for the better. “Since I am married, for diplomatic reasons I only took men as crew on board *Bomoh* for the first few voyages,” Ralph told me. “Then a female friend asked to join in. I was amazed to see how the rest of the crew reacted. The boat was kept tidier, the male macho thing calmed down. Language got more subdued. But best of all, other cruisers who were mostly couples or families started including us in their social life.” David confirmed this latter aspect of cruising life. “The minute Charlie was on board, I began getting more invitations from cruising families I met along the way.”

As for couples, Ralph told me there was only one time when he and the rest of the crew were happy to see someone get off the boat. Two of the crew who flew in to Nelson for the Fiordland trip met only when they came on board. They bonded instantly, fell in love, asked to share the double cabin, then seemed to disengage from everyone else on board. This makes me think of one rule Larry and I had when we were choosing crew for big boat delivery jobs (45 feet or over; below that we usually added only one crew): we never took couples on board. First, As Ralph found, they can become a dividing factor; secondly, if one decided they weren’t happy and wanted to abandon ship, we lost two crew at the same time. The one time this happened, it was a day before we were setting off across the Atlantic—exactly when we most needed a full complement of pick-up crew.

3

Go Now, Pay on the Way



Stores and maintenance nibble away at your cruising kitty. Entertainment doubles the pleasure of your cruise, but costs money. Few people correctly estimate what they will spend on their first extended cruise; almost everyone tends to spend more than they expected.

A simple modest yacht will make cruising more economical. Two people and a self-steering vane can sail a smaller yacht alone, with no crew and less expense. Guests can come and go but you aren't dependent on them.

A boat that sails well in light winds, one with only a single mast and plenty of light-air sails, will keep costs down. Less motoring, less fuel, less wear and tear on the engine.

But no matter how one economizes, one still needs money. And earning what we call "freedom chips" while enjoying cruising at the same time has always been, and still is, possible.

One thing we've learned from our own experiences, and those of people all the way around the world, is that you can't depend on chartering to finance your voyage. We have never met any true cruisers who covered all

their expenses by chartering their boat. Some have earned occasional spending money, but never enough to pay for all their cruising. Yes, very experienced sailors like John and Amanda Neal (mahina.com) or John Harries (morganscloud.com) who offer other folks a chance to experience ocean passage making, have made a living by having guests on board their boats. But, as both willingly admit, as enjoyable as their business is, it is just that—a full-time business complete with schedules and itineraries, not cruising.

To charter successfully, your boat must be large enough to sleep at least four plus crew. That means you carry the expense of a large boat when you are cruising, and it only pays for itself when you are chartering. You are competing with professional organizations which offer immaculate, well-found yachts designed for chartering—with crew, agents, and advertising paid for out of substantial budgets. If you plan to work in one place, you might also have to bring your boat into survey to meet local standards. This usually means adding extra gear, often very expensive gear.

Running a charter boat is hard work. Cooking, sailing, cleaning, making up bunks—while at the same time maintaining the boat and entertaining the guests. Like running a hotel that goes to windward: it's not really fun.

Some people have dreams of inviting friends to come along and pay towards the cost of the cruise. This can work while you are voyaging close to your home. But once you venture farther offshore, you'll find friends cannot afford to pay for the cost of airfares to get from one side of the Pacific to the other, or do not feel it is worthwhile traveling for two or three days each way to reach you when they only have a two-week holiday window.

Day chartering can provide extra income with none of the hassles of meals and overnight guests. Fenton Hamlin, a Kiwi friend of ours, earned extra pocket money taking folks out for day sails around Thailand recently. His 30-foot Hess cutter has wide side decks with room for six guests—excellent set-up for day sails, but also added wear and tear on his boat. Another friend earned extra cash by offering one-day small boat handling lessons when she was cruising in the Puget Sound. But even if both of these

ideas work well, day chartering means remaining in a resort or sailing town long enough to become known, and the best chartering season is usually the very best cruising season.

One high-paying but unpredictable way to earn money is by delivering someone's yacht. Cruising sailors occasionally arrive in a port where a yacht is stranded because its owner must get it back home and doesn't have the time, the crew, or the skill to move it. If you happen to be in the right place at the right time, if you are comfortable leaving your own boat in a foreign port for two or three months at a time, a five- or six-week-long delivery job could provide six months' worth of cruising funds. But as we explain in [Chapter 4](#), there is a lot of competition for good delivery jobs. Bad ones can put you off the idea for life.

Using your boat as your workshop and assisting other less prepared or less skilled yachtsmen in maintaining, repairing, or upgrading their yachts is one of the most consistent ways we paid for our early years of voyaging. I met three different voyagers in the past season of cruising through Fiji and Vanuatu who were doing just that (2018). A sailor with rigging, sailmaking, or canvas repair skills and equipment can almost always find work along the way. A good electrician is just as much in demand. A refrigeration expert will often find work. Carpentry work is still a viable way to earn as you cruise, with many boat owners wanting broken cabinets repaired or interior upgrades done.

General maintenance and repairs can easily be done with the tools and spare parts you can carry on a small boat. By arriving in a port that has both cruising boats and charter boats just at fitting-out time, you can almost guarantee yourself work. September in Florida, March in England, October in the Virgin Islands, February throughout the Mediterranean—wherever there is a yachting season starting, painters, varnishers, and repairers are overworked. One thing we learned: when looking for the best paying jobs in major yachting centers, power yachts are often the best targets for seasonal maintenance work since the majority of these owners are used to paying relatively high rates to get their work done. But in every case, the secret to

getting the jobs is your own boat—your calling card, so to speak. If it is well maintained, work will soon follow.

But if you set up shop to help maintain other people's cruising boats, here's one point of advice you should heed above all others: never undercut locals. We charge our normal rates or the same as the locals, whichever is higher. Then we try to work twice as hard. Undercutting only leads to resentment. If you are dependent on using your unique skills to earn as you cruise, you will sometimes find it is hard to set boundaries among the other cruisers you have met in various ports along the way, especially if you are cruising in company. I know we did. Folks would ask Larry for advice on their rigging, or for a bit of help with a broken hatch frame or structural problem. Larry would willingly go over to their boat and look at the problem then sit down and draw up some ideas and discuss possible solutions. Sometimes the boat owner offered to hire Larry; other times there was an expectation that Larry do the work as a favor, or in exchange for a few meals. So to save any embarrassment or misunderstanding, I would watch for an appropriate moment to joke, "Larry's advice is free, but the minute he picks up a tool I start the charge clock running."

Seasonal resorts are frequently short of help. As a waitress, bartender, sailing instructor, tour guide, or cook, any semi-skilled or just plain hard-working person can earn well during a four-month season. Living on your boat will help you save money fast.

Several cruising friends have taken over the management of small resorts during the off-season, so the owners could take a good long holiday. Resort life is a complete change from cruising and you will reinforce not only your cruising kitty, but very probably your desire to cruise off to a deserted island, too.

Crew positions are good seasonal work. Cooks are always in demand on charter yachts—difficult work but it often pays well, with tips besides if you work on a luxury yacht.

And for those with computer repair skills, short term jobs seem to abound the farther you get away from major towns and cities. These days,

with so many sailors wanting to have their own blog sites, and with small isolated resorts needing sites that actually attract attention, website designer friends report getting some nice cruising kitty top-ups all along the way. If you have computer skills, getting away from yachts often produces the best results. Technical skills are in demand in every developing country. Electronic specialist friends have had offers of work in Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia. Doctors, teachers, and farm specialists receive very high wages in developing Latin countries. Write ahead to the board or department that is in charge of positions for your profession and you may find they have a list of available jobs that are perfect for you. Celia V wrote the New Zealand School Board and was offered a position teaching physically-handicapped mentally-advanced children if she sent her credentials in ahead of time. She was assured of a high-paying job a year in advance, so cruising through the South Pacific caused fewer financial worries. If you are offered a job in a foreign country, you can usually be sure of getting a visa.

We've met several doctors and dentists who have closed their own practices and put their names on locum lists maintained by various employment agencies worldwide. These professionals can then take over another physician's practice for two or three months at a very good salary while the resident doctor enjoys a vacation. George Bilsbarrow, a Canadian doctor, cruised all around Europe and the Mediterranean this way. He'd accept temporary jobs in England and Scotland which usually came complete with the doctor's residence and car. He'd work three months, then cruise for six or seven more.

Labor jobs such as construction worker, waitress, fishing boat crew, or plumber's helper can easily be found in the United States, its territories, and many other developed countries. In some places you will have to sign contracts in order to get proper working visas. Here in New Zealand, there is a huge demand for builders. Some cruisers with proven building trade skills have reported getting temporary visas within a week of applying. Ask around among the cruising fleet for information about getting the proper papers. Sometimes approaching the right office first will make a big

difference. If you plan to spend the hurricane season in a place like New Zealand or Australia, check online as these are just two countries which offer six-month or year-long temporary working visas.

Writing, blogging, vlogging, and video making sounds like a useful way to finance a cruise, and once you are well known to editors, or have built up a substantial number of blog subscribers, it can certainly help take the sting out of expenses. Writing articles can comfortably fit into a cruising life. But to keep up with the demands of the world of video-based blogging means spending a substantial part of each day taking photos, writing, video making and editing. Your family might get tired of posing for pictures. You will often get frustrated with slow or non-existent Internet connections and, of course, you will be tempted to spend extra funds on cameras, computers, and gear to upgrade your vlog. On the other hand, writing and video making are both a wonderful way to fill those rainy, foggy, or stormy days when you are harbor-bound. It's an extremely portable profession, and if the money you earn can be counted as a bonus, not a necessity, you may come to really enjoy the challenge.¹

If you have other creative skills, those may pay off as well. We've met artists who were able to sell their watercolors and sketches to local shops and other cruising sailors. In fact, a delightful young man who lived on a 26-foot Saint Pierre Dory in Canada's Gulf Islands showed us some small sketches he'd made of *Seraffyn* when we sailed into Canoe Cove. Though we had a relatively small cruising kitty, we were hooked and ordered a 12-by-18 pen-and-ink sketch from Ron Wall. We saw another enterprising bit of artistry in Antigua where Nick Skeates, who at that time was cruising on his 30-footer, *Wylo*. He was earning extra money by building replicas of people's boats inside tiny bottles.

Almost all cruising people eventually try trading to supplement their funds. We successfully purchased some beautiful molas, squares of hand sewn artwork, from the Cuna Indians near Panama and turned an investment

of US\$75 into \$600 over the next year (in 1970 that was the equivalent to ¼ of our yearly cruising costs). But we made our choices with the help of some local experts. Several years later we met two ex-Peace Corps volunteers who had studied Indonesian art for four years. They sailed from there towards Israel with close to US\$2,000 worth of antiques and artwork on their trimaran. In Israel they put on a show for local yacht club members and their friends and netted US\$6,000 the first evening. To trade successfully you must have not only a knowledge of the items you are buying, but the patience to wait for the right resale market. One unwary yachtsman was sold gems by a reputable dealer in Sri Lanka. It turned out the rubies and sapphires he bought were no bargain at the time, just fairly priced. But over the next two years there was a tremendous increase in gem prices which would have netted the yachtsman a good profit, if he'd had the money to wait. Instead, he sold the gems for no profit and cursed the Sri Lankan dealer. Just two weeks ago I was on board a yacht that had been sailed across the Pacific. The owner had chosen a route which took him to some of the most southern of the Tuamotu Islands, places rarely visited by other yachts. There he bought two jars full of black pearls from the local people. They had charged him only about a dollar a pearl, never claiming the pearls had great value. But to Jim, the pearls looked just the same as ones that sold for a hundred dollars each. Unfortunately buyers in his next destinations didn't agree, especially as he had no paperwork to prove the authenticity of the glowing round orbs. Two years later the pearls have become just an interesting souvenir, not the cruising extending investment he envisioned.



Among the various ways Larry and I earned as we cruised: yacht deliveries, wooden boat repairs, boat surveys, rigging repairs including splicing a large number of steering cables for charter yachts, painting boats, varnish work, charter skipper, sailmaking.

Be extremely careful of local import laws before you offer to sell things from your boat. Sailors all know they can forfeit their boat, their liberty, and, in Indonesia, even their life for selling or even carrying narcotics. But few realize that the sale of one bottle of liquor can lead to the same thing in Saudi Arabia. In Sri Lanka it is illegal to sell anything that is imported without paying 100 percent import duties. So until you check on the local customs regulations, don't start trading.

The most exclusive way we saw of financing a cruise was that used by the French owner of a glorious 58-foot Herreshoff ketch. He was the owner of eight large companies, located in eight different countries. He cruised from one to the other, checking them over. But this is a rare case. Cruising

and business back home don't usually mix well. We know. Larry and I tried it when we were voyaging on *Taleisin* from California through the Line Islands and down to New Zealand in 2009, and the constant rush to reach a telephone or find an Internet connection tainted some of our finest days and kept us from lingering in the out-of-the-way coves we otherwise would have enjoyed.

Some cruisers we have met use Internet consulting to continue as part owners of a business. But this does add serious complications to a floating life. One cruising man we met in the bar in the Bayonna Yacht Club in northern Spain was surrounded by packed luggage, though he'd only just sailed in the day before. "I called my office this morning just to confirm how things were going. Now I have to cancel my voyage across the Atlantic, leave my boat, and fly home. If I hadn't called, they'd probably have handled the problems without me. But now I'd worry too much to enjoy myself." If you want to go cruising and enjoy real freedom, you should probably consider closing your physical business or sell it, and arrange to put the receipts in some sort of investment that does not require constant attention.

Air travel is far less expensive now than it was when we first set off cruising. Several cruisers cite this as the reason it is financially viable to cruise for six months, then fly back to their home country to work. Bill and Cathy Norrie spent almost a decade doing this, eventually sailing right around the world. Bill, an anesthesiologist at a major Canadian hospital, loved his work and didn't want to give it up completely. When they finished circumnavigating his job was waiting for him. Other friends who work in seasonal occupations have done the same, finding a safe place to leave their boat then flying home to work through the ski season, or the summer climbing season. The key to this is finding a safe place to leave the boat and ensuring it is properly stored away, something more easily done today with information gleaned from Internet forums on sites like cruisersforum.com or noonsite.com. But there are other downsides to this half-time cruising option. Each time you return to your home country, you will have additional

expenses beyond the flights and the costs of storing your boat. These include one often overlooked but potential budget breaker: in your home country you will be able to get all sorts of boat gear you might otherwise find you could live without.

However you decide to arrange your income, don't worry too much about finding ways to earn as you go. The keys are to be flexible and be creative. If you insist on looking for work in exactly the same field as you left, you may have far less luck than you would if you tried something slightly off the normal career track.

Peace of mind for those who decide to work along the way is having enough money tucked away somewhere to live on for six months should a catastrophe strike. The money should be slightly difficult to access without some careful thinking beforehand so you don't deplete the fund frivolously. Over 45 years of voyaging we tried to keep the equivalent of six months' cruising expenses socked away in our emergency fund. Then, as we worked towards the next part of our cruise, we outfitted the boat with as many stores as she'd hold (on 24-foot *Seraffyn* that was about three months of food and drink; on *Taleisin* we could carry almost five months' worth). We'd then work until we earned enough money to cover six to nine months of normal cruising expenses, and sail onward. When we were near the point of where our immediate cruising funds ran down to three months' supply, we'd look for work. That three-month window was important; through the years we found that if we had three months to look, we usually found something that paid well and was interesting.

There are extra bonuses to working along the way. It gives you an excuse to stop moving on for a while, a way to pace yourself so you don't try to rush around the world in a limited amount of time. We both felt our work stops really enhanced our cruising. Some of our finest memories are of the people we met, the unique experiences we had because we had time to blend into the local community. Quite often we'd get all our yearly maintenance done at the same time, so we sailed on with fond memories, a

replenished cruising kitty, and a cruising home that felt fresh and ready for the next adventure.

Enterprising cruising sailors keep finding new ways to earn money along the way. With some imagination you can join them. Get your reasonably sized cruiser, put some cash in the bank, and go. Waiting until you can afford to live in the style you'd like to become accustomed to is a curse against setting sail for distant horizons.

[1](#) In *Capable Cruiser*, third edition, I have an updated look at the subject of writing articles and books in the chapter called 'Writing and Cruising: Does it Pay?'

4

Yacht Deliveries



Every business deal has two sides and yacht deliveries are no exception. The owner is handing over his precious yacht to a complete stranger, one who will take it on a journey full of potential dangers. The owner wants his boat to arrive in the same condition in which it left, as soon as possible.

The yacht deliverer, on the other hand, sees a Pandora's Box full of hidden problems. All he wants is to move the boat from point A to point B as quickly as possible with no breakdowns or delays so he can collect his fee and get on with his plans.

Few business relations entail less contact between employee and employer. That's why special thought should be given to a delivery contract. The owner should know what he is asking for and who he is hiring. The deliverer must consider the responsibility he is assuming and the risks involved.

THE OWNER

Deliveries cost money and there are few bargains. When you hire someone to sail your six- or seven-figure investment across an ocean, you need a skilled person, one who will maintain your yacht all the time it is

underway. The person you hire must know how to navigate, sail, handle a crew, and operate engines and generators. More importantly, the delivery crew should be able to maintain and repair almost everything on board with what spares are on the boat and also how and where to find supplies in foreign places. He/she must know how to maintain not only the sails and canvas work on deck and the exterior of your boat but also your interior, keeping it clean while underway. This all adds up to a very skilled person. Remember that your delivery captain is involved twenty-four hours a day, and you'll understand why delivery fees look high at first glance.

At present (2019), a contract delivery will cost you about \$2.50 to \$4 (US) per nautical mile, plus fuel and airfare for the captain and a reasonable number of crew, with shorter deliveries costing more per mile. Or you can hire a delivery captain on a daily basis for about \$300 to \$500 per day for short deliveries, \$300 to 400 per day for longer deliveries, plus all expenses, including crew, food, fuel, and airfares.¹ With a good delivery crew, the final fee will come out about the same whether you figure it on a contract or a daily basis.

What is the alternative? You can ship your yacht by truck, for continental deliveries, or by ship. Land transport prices may be less for mid-distance deliveries but allowances have to be made for un-stepping the mast, hauling and re-launching, re-stepping the mast, and either shrink-wrapping the whole boat or cleaning off and repairing damage from road debris. For trans-ocean deliveries, one company, Dockwise Yacht Transport (yacht-transport.com) has a specialized, float-on ship which sails a set route. With this service you do not have to remove your mast or provide a cradle for the boat. But you do have to get your boat to and from one of their specified loading ports. The price to move a 45-foot sailboat with a 13-foot beam from Auckland, New Zealand, to San Francisco with this service was quoted as approximately US\$36,000, plus agents fees (October 2018). To ship to places that are not serviced by Dockwise, the rate must include un-stepping the mast, building the cradle, paying agents, re-launching and re-stepping the mast, and transporting it from a big ship's harbor to a marina.

The freighter choice is, at first glance, always the more expensive option. But it does save 7,000 miles of wear and tear on the boat and its gear.

Good professional deliverers are expensive; shipping is expensive—but bargain deliveries can cost you even more. Frank, a man we came to know when we were cruising along the southern coast of Africa, told us he couldn't afford a regular delivery team and gladly accepted when a friend of his said, "I've got two months off. I'll take your ketch back to England for you. Just pay me the food and airfare." Frank had cruised locally for a few weeks with this sailor and was aware that his friend's longest offshore passage had been 200 miles, but the man loved Frank's boat. Two months later Frank received a message. The boat had been abandoned in a tiny port 200 miles from its starting point. All of its gear had been stripped off by scavengers. The friend had been scared to leave port after a two-day blow outside of Cape Town. His crew had jumped ship. The engine had quit. In the end it cost Frank his boat. He couldn't leave his contract job in England to fly out and repair the damages. No delivery team would go for the boat after hearing a report of its condition. Frank ended up selling his dream ship for the price of its lead ballast.

Delivering a boat is not fun; it is work. Asking amateurs to do it may be asking for trouble. We can cite stories of cut-rate deliveries that took two months to move a boat 800 miles, of boats abandoned during storms, and of boats confiscated when nonprofessionals used them for smuggling drugs. Without a reputation to protect, a non-professional deliverer may think first of *himself* and second about your boat.

To protect you and your investment, don't hire anyone to move your yacht unless you can get the names and addresses of at least two people whose boats he has delivered. Call these people. Ask them what condition their boat arrived in. If the owner tells you his boat arrived on time and in good shape, you've probably found a good deliverer.

If you are arranging a delivery through an agency, insist upon knowing the exact person who will be in charge of your yacht. Call him and get the names of people whose boats he has delivered. If an agency is very busy they might let relatively inexperienced people handle jobs that seem simple.

Several years ago we delivered two yachts from Miami to Puerto Rico. The first time we arrived in San Juan, we noticed a 40-footer laid up at the dock, its transom black with soot, its diesel out of commission. Three weeks later we arrived again to see a second boat, identical to the first, its transom also black with soot, its engine out of commission. Both boats were part of a large contract handled by a firm with an excellent reputation. In both cases, since the distance involved was only about 700 miles the deliveries had been turned over to sailors on their first professional jobs—and it showed. No matter what reputation the agency has, check the references of the person who will be on your boat and in charge.

Don't be swayed by the sell a sailor walking down the dock gives you. *Call his references.* The owner of a 50-foot South African yacht came by one day to tell us he'd found a very inexpensive delivery captain. He described the crew of a local charter boat, a young bearded sailor who told excellent sea stories. It was only after the boat was at sea that the owner learned that the longest voyage his captain had made was from Barcelona to Palma de Mallorca, a distance of 120 miles. The owner told us he started worrying when he saw the boat owned by the man he had hired. It was in terrible condition and had been left secured to a mooring in an exposed part of the harbor. As the owner said, "If he takes care of his own boat that way, what will mine look like in two months?"

Once you've located the person you wish to hire, tell him all the problems he may encounter with your boat so he can plan accordingly. If it doesn't have an autopilot, tell him so he can arrange sufficient crew. Let him know the state of the engine, its fuel consumption, and all about your electronics and equipment. Don't be optimistic about the boat's range or fuel capacity. Give the captain a list of the sailing gear, tools, and spares you have on board. The delivery captain may fly to Europe to pick up your boat and find that he didn't bring the right gear and spares along—then he'll have to spend your money and his time getting ready to set off. The more complete your description, the more prepared he'll be.

An owner of a boat which was stuck in Mallorca, Spain, got a transatlantic call from his delivery captain: “Sorry, I’ve just arrived, checked over your boat. I can’t take it across the Atlantic till it has new standing rigging.”

The owner replied, “What? That’s only six-year-old wire. I crossed the Atlantic two years ago with it.”

The delivery captain, a well-respected, very experienced man, then refused the job. The owner lost the cost of two airline tickets. He then asked the local rigger his opinion, only to be told the same thing. Fortunately, the original delivery skipper happened to be a friend of ours and also knew we were in Spain. He suggested the owner contact us. When he did, Larry gave him a delivery price which included splicing up new standing rigging before we set off to sea (the owner willingly paid for this extra work). If the owner had given our friend a true description of the boat’s condition, Bob would have brought along gear to repair the rigging and allowed time to do it. Furthermore, if you have hired a good person, trust his judgment. He is the one who is risking his life and reputation when he sets off across an ocean.

Most delivery skippers have to meet a schedule. If this is to be a windward delivery and they can’t lay their course under sail, they will probably motorsail. So expect some wear and tear on your engine. In the case of a racing boat this may actually be cheaper as the savings on sail wear will more than make up for the added engine hours.

The delivery captain and crew are going to be living on your boat for several weeks in possibly rough conditions at sea; if you have any treasures, either take them off the boat or store them carefully away and warn the deliverer. There is bound to be some wear and tear on a yacht during any passage, and you must expect to lose a glass or two or have some chafed lines—or, if heavy weather is encountered, even more extreme damages.

In one case, in which we heard both sides of the story, a well-respected captain was asked to deliver a 48-foot racing boat from the US northeast coast to the Southern Ocean Racing Circuit in Florida during late November. Because of the risks of storms, the job was priced to allow all professional crew. Two days out, the delivery ran into a freak cyclonic

storm. For three days the team trailed warps, lay hove-to, and, when sails blew out, lay ahull, doing anything they could to ease the violent motion. On the last day, a sea turned the boat upside down and the mizzenmast carried away. The crew was able to cut the wreckage loose with no further damage. When the weather eased, they stood into Norfolk, Virginia, and called the owner and his insurance company. Instead of being relieved that no one had been lost or injured, the owner raged over the fact that the eighteen Barient winch handles, stored in pockets on deck, had gone over when the boat rolled. Unfortunately, as the winch handles were not listed on his insurance policy, he had to pay to have them replaced. Considering that several fishing boats were lost at sea during this storm and that the four men on board had survived three days of winds that were in excess of 100 miles an hour, I think the owner was being unfair about the loss of winch handles.

It's important to understand that most professional delivery skippers do not want to take owners along on the trip. As owner, you may want to cruise, learn about navigating, and enjoy the trip. Skippers want to move the boat fast and have a crew who will do the menial work. It's difficult to tell an owner to scrub the bilge or clean out the head. It's harder yet to say, "We're setting sail today" if the owner wants one more day in port. Taking owners on deliveries creates a conflict of interest. Deliveries are rarely a good way to learn to cruise as the majority of delivery skippers do not have the patience or training to be sailing instructors.

Finally, as in all business deals, get a contract. Make sure it gives an estimate of delivery time. It should also include the deliverer's expected route and the number of crew he plans to take, plus what expenses he will cover, and what you as the owner must pay for.

THE DELIVERER

"Delivery work looks like a great idea. Four or five hundred bucks a day just to enjoy yourself and go sailing."

It's not that easy. Few delivery jobs turn out to be fun. Job equals work. People aren't going to pay you to take a well-outfitted, fine sailing yacht on a downwind, perfect season cruise. Boats are almost always delivered to windward. Old or neglected boats are delivered. Brand-new boats fresh from the factory, full of bugs and untried systems, are delivered. And whatever the condition, the owner usually wants the boat as soon as possible. In most cases, delivery services figure on a time of one day for every 100 miles plus preparation time. That doesn't allow you much cruising. As an example, when Larry and I were moving a 49-footer 5,800 miles from the Baleaic Islands in the Med to New Orleans, we spent ten days preparing the boat and arranging crew, fifty days at sea. We had to depend almost solely on sails in often very light winds as the engine was not in top condition. Then we spent eleven days in four ports for a total of seventy-one days. Two days in each port we devoted to renewing stores, going over the engine and generator, and maintaining the sails and varnish. That left us three days for relaxing over two months—or less than a day per port.

Most delivery captains combine delivering with another profession, because unless they are on the top of the list with a busy delivery service, they'll rarely earn enough moving yachts to support a home and family. But for cruising people like ourselves, or for people with loosely planned schedules, delivering yachts is good experience. And it's also a fine way to earn a lump sum of money—because it's hard to spend much at sea.

Delivering someone else's dream ship is a large responsibility. Instead of taking a month to get to know the boat, you have to step on board, survey and assess it, outfit it, and get underway in a week or less. Once you're on board you have to be a jack-of-all-trades. You must be able to jury rig, haywire, and maintain a boat you are completely unfamiliar with. You'll have to know what spares are vital. The owner is turning the job over to you so he won't want to be bothered. The last thing he wants is to be called from each port with "The water pump impellor is burned out" or "The generator's not working right—can you send me a replacement?" The people who make

the best delivery captains are good mechanics and riggers first, and sailors and navigators second.

An owner is influenced by first appearances just as much as is anyone else. If his or her yacht arrives in port with nice-looking varnish, scrubbed decks, and the interior in immaculate condition, he or she will overlook a few worn pieces of gear, a few dents or malfunctioning mechanical devices. It really pays to spend your time at sea spiffing up the boat. It also pays to roll up and store away carpets and curtains. In a factory-fresh boat, avoid using any facilities you can so that the owner has the thrill of stepping into a new-feeling boat when it arrives. When we happened to be hired to deliver three brand new boats from Miami to Puerto Rico in one season, Larry insisted on packaging each of the boat's cushions in plastic then storing as much of the soft furnishings as possible away in the forward cabin. It made our life (we had two crew with us) less comfortable. But when we presented the boats to each of their owners, they were impressed. Each one added a tip and a fine dinner on the town for the delivery team. Each provided the written reference we needed to help us get the next delivery job.

Whatever you do, write a contract, then get a one-third to one-half deposit before you leave to pick up a yacht. Make sure your contract states how the final payment will be made and in what currency. Include a clause that allows for expenses during breakdowns. Of course, if the delivery is based on a daily fee, this clause is not necessary.

Be sure the owner provides proof of insurance as this will be needed if you wish to take the boat into a marina. Also ask for documentation that indicates you are the rightful skipper of the vessel.

As for the final payment, it is safest to ask for cash on the barrelhead in the currency of your own country. Don't turn over the boat until you are paid either by the owner or his agent. We have never had any problem with payment but we've heard of several issues, including one story about a deliverer who had to wait two weeks for the owner to turn South African rands into dollars to pay the fee. The deliverer missed a berth on the Cape Town-Rio race because of the delay.

To protect yourself in foreign countries, have the owner write up a document making you captain of the yacht with full responsibility during a specified time in specified waters. It will come in handy as you clear in or out of ports.

Make it clear you will be inspecting the boat from stem to stern and need it to be clear of any contraband, especially drugs of any sort. Remember, it will be very difficult to prove it was the owner who brought contraband on board, not you. We were once caught in a potentially very dangerous situation because during our pre-departure inspection we didn't bother to open two sealed cardboard boxes which were labeled "Oil Filters." When we handed the boat over to its owner he thanked us for bringing him two boxes of hashish—two boxes which could have put Larry in jail for several years.²

With the ease of modern communications, be willing to keep in touch. But keep the contact limited, maybe an email or text every third day. Otherwise you might encounter the problem that plagued one of our friends as he was delivering a boat from the Marquesas Islands to Australia. The owner kept watching the weather patterns and the boat's progress from his desk in San Diego, then making suggestions by Sat phone, email, and texts as to routing, departure times, even sail changes. In Apia, Samoa our friend said he was ready to walk off the job when he was told to take a route different than the one he had in mind. When eventually he delivered the boat, the owner and he were at loggerheads. No tip, no letter of reference, and some undeserved bad press.

Keep a log for the owner. He'll really appreciate knowing how many hours the engines were run, what spares you used up, and what maintenance you did.

Yacht deliveries involve a great deal of money. But with careful research, good communications, and logical expectations, as well as a good contract, a yacht delivery should come off with both parties satisfied and ready to do business again.

WHAT ABOUT LEAVING YOUR OWN BOAT WHILE YOU DELIVER ANOTHER ONE?

Larry and I had been cruising on *Seraffyn* for five months. We were having a great time near La Paz in Baja California but our funds were dwindling and we were talking about sailing back to Newport Beach to look for work. Then we were offered a job delivering a handsome 48-foot powerboat from La Paz, Baja California, to San Diego. Larry was an experienced delivery skipper and saw this as a plum of a job so jumped at the chance, rushing back to the boat to share the news with me. But within minutes it was Larry who began worrying about leaving our boat unattended in Mexico for several weeks. I shared his concerns. We talked long into the evening and I am not sure which one of us said it first: “We have to decide who owns whom. Do we own this boat or does it own us?” We realized then, if we couldn’t find ways to feel comfortable about leaving the boat in various places along our sailing route, not only would we be unable to deliver boats for other people, but we also couldn’t travel inland to explore beyond the fringes of the countries we visited.

Since that first time, we ended up leaving our boat in dozens of different ports in places as far flung as Brazil, the tip of South Africa, and the canals of Chile while we delivered boats, went off to teach seminars, or traveled inland to extend our cruising beyond the edges of the lands we visited. In each case we took some time to research and find places which were not prone to theft or extreme weather damage and then paid someone to tend the boat on a daily basis.



Owners expect their boat to look pristine when it arrives.

Whenever possible we tried to leave the boat on a mooring, either one we set using our own anchors³ or one we inspected ourselves, diving to check each and every connection and link of chain. There are several advantages to a mooring: better ventilation as the boat stays head to wind, less sun damage for the same reason, less risk of damage should some other boat lose control as your boat will move away from the blow, less risk of petty theft, and far lower costs. We used the extra money towards hiring a local to do a daily check on the boat. In La Paz that first time, rather than

leaving *Seraffyn* in the city where we had seen signs of the devastation that can occur during hurricanes, we set a mooring in a very sheltered cove near a fisherman's house. We hired the fisherman to row out to the boat, wash the decks down with salt water, and set the anchor light each night. His presence kept the boat from looking abandoned. The success of that first delivery and the good condition of our boat when we returned set the tone for the next 4-½ decades of cruising.

Larry and I rarely insured our boats when we cruised. The same goes for when we left them on their own. We preferred to spending the funds on a boat caretaker. We also made sure we choose someone who had a tender capable of reaching our boat in stormforce winds and the knowledge to do something about potential problems. We took some time going over the boat, taking on board any suggestions the caretaker made. Even when we were leaving the boat in a marina, as we did for six months in Chile, we didn't depend on the marina people to care for the boat, but instead hired a local sailor to come down each day and check the mooring lines, the lines holding the covers in place, and the condition of the cleats holding the boat.

Finally, we did not leave our boat unattended in the tropics for more than a week or so. Boats left closed up in the tropics⁴ tend to develop interior mold and insect infestations. Cyclones are extremely unpredictable and, even among those tropical island groups which have not had a direct hit for years, you are gambling with fate if you choose to leave your boat unattended in the cyclone belt during cyclone season, be it in a marina or onshore in a boatyard.

1 John Kretschmer, yayablues.com, who has delivered an impressive catalogue of boats, verified these figures. According to John, current US delivery skippers allow \$150 per day for a mate. "I much preferred to charge an 'all in' price and take care of my own expenses," John stated. "That way I could make sailing decisions I am comfortable with and not fret about the meter running if I decided to lay for a day or two." He also added, "One has to carefully read insurance policies as some require a minimum 3-person crew."

Darryl Wade of Pacific Boat Deliveries (pacificboatdelivery.com.au), a firm which moves boats along the Australian coast and through the islands of the Pacific, charges AUS\$300 per day and does not generally pay crew for shorter local deliveries. For long-distance deliveries he quoted AUS\$11,000 (US\$9,010 in 2019 dollars), plus all expenses, to move a boat from Brisbane, Australia, to Los Angeles, a distance of approximately 6,300 nautical miles.

2 This story is recounted in more detail in *Seraffyn's Mediterranean Adventure*.

3 We carried our own tested swivel and extra heavy mooring lines to create or upgrade any mooring we planned to use.

4 David Haigh on *Sahula* was able to circumvent this problem when he left his boat in Panama to take a six-month backpacking trip the length of South America. Panama, though in the deep tropics, is cyclone-free. Before leaving he wiped every surface of the boat with white vinegar, including all the cushions, bulkheads, etc. On his return he found the interior of the boat mold- and mildew-free.

5

Thirty Feet Is Enough



“The perfect length for a cruising boat is 57 feet, though a few Spartan souls have been known to go in boats as small as 30 feet on deck.”

The year was 1970. We were sitting in the Panama Canal Yacht Club waiting out a rain squall. I was reading an article entitled ‘The Perfect Cruising Yacht’ in a two-month-old boating magazine. I looked out towards where 24-foot *Seraffyn* (24 feet 4 inches, to be precise) lay to a mooring after carrying us through two years and many thousands of miles of wondrous sailing. She was surrounded by 17 other cruising boats—a bumper crop for that time. After computing the figures, I was able to determine the average length of all the cruising boats on moorings that day was 29 feet 8 inches, the largest boat in view 38 feet length on deck.

After more than 46 years and 200,000 miles of voyaging, including almost three circumnavigations, first on little *Seraffyn*, and then on her big sister, 29-foot 6-inch *Taleisin*, I still hear the refrain, “You’d be crazy to try cruising in a small boat.” Strange how some things never change. And today, the definition of small has grown to include any boat under 45 feet!

If you take a quick look around ports where offshore cruisers congregate, you will see the majority are sailing bigger boats, boats with lengths that average 42 feet on deck, maybe even longer. But in there among them are a fair smattering of young and not so young wanderers who got off cruising far sooner and often are having an easier and more enjoyable time on boats as small as 24 feet LOD.

The most obvious advantage of choosing a 28- to 32-foot yacht instead of a 45-footer is the initial cost. No matter how you finance it, if you spend only half of your available funds on the boat, the rest can act as a buffer or insurance plan. Half in the boat, half in liquid assets is a definite contribution to peace of mind as you cruise and explore.

When buying small you can go for quality. Rather than looking for the largest boat for the least money, you can search for the best-built, best-designed, and best-outfitted 30-footer available. Your extra funds can let you outfit the boat to your exact needs before you depart.

Once you sail, money becomes even more important. It's all going out, and none coming in. Over the past three years, I have discussed cruising costs with many of the sailors who have voyaged across the Pacific then come to visit us here at our home base in New Zealand. As I traveled to boat shows in the US and Australia and during a research trip to Tonga in 2017 I also put this question to the voyagers I met. I found that in boats of about 30 feet the owners figured all expenses, including boat maintenance, food, and entertainment, averaged between US\$800 and \$1,200 a month, depending on where they were cruising. Those in boats 45 feet and over gave averages from \$3,500 to \$6,000 per month. Why the huge differences? Of course part of the equation is life-style choices; i.e., if you have more money, you feel free to spend more. But at least half the difference is due directly to the size of boat.

Boat-maintenance costs rise at close to the cube of the waterline length. Approximately one gallon of antifouling paint will suffice for a 30-footer but a 45-footer needs around four gallons. Gear replacement on a 45- to 50-footer can be three to five times as expensive as it would be for a 28-footer. One good example is sails. Not only will the larger boat have larger sails,

but the fabric will need to be heavier. The cost for a top-of-the-line 280-square-foot mainsail for a 28-foot Bristol Channel Cutter using 6½-ounce sail fabric was quoted at US\$2,300 here in New Zealand just a few weeks ago. For a 46-foot Hallberg-Rassy with 500 square feet of mainsail which requires 9-ounce fabric the quoted price was in excess of \$7,000. Furthermore, the larger boat will give you space to carry more electronics, and more or larger outboard motors. After a few years of voyaging these will need upgrading or replacing.

Another advantage to the smaller yacht is that, wherever you travel, shipyard managers, store owners, and fuel docks have a tendency to judge the size of your wallet by the length of your yacht. We have watched the same product or service billed at two different prices for two different-sized boats. As one Latin boatyard manager we worked with said to us, “If they can afford a yacht that large, they must be rich.” Furthermore, you can often find smaller, out of the way boatyards to use when it is time for a haul-out. We were cruising near Isla Grande south of Rio de Janeiro and learned haul-out fees for yachts at the Brachuy Marina boatyard, though less expensive than those in Rio, were high, even in comparison with high-end US prices. Each layday cost almost as much as we spent to eat each week. But with *Taleisin*’s smaller size, we were able to find a boatyard owned used by local fishermen just ten miles to the north where the costs were literally ten times lower. Bonus—the fishermen we met there became friends and introduced us to yet another side of this intriguing country.

One real advantage to *Taleisin*’s small size and limited space may just have been personal, but is worth stating. If we had had more room, I would have bought more things, Larry would have thought of more tools he needed. Souvenirs, toys, clothes: we’d have spent much more money on things we learned we could do very well without. It’s one way of maintaining a budget.

Let’s forget about money for a moment. Sailing a small boat is much easier. Once you are outfitted with a self-steering vane, your 24- to 34-

footer can be easily sailed by a couple or singlehandedly. You don't need extra crew for ocean passages, which decreases potential stress; if you are dependent on others for crew, they can be a big problem. A 30-footer is large enough to make having guests a treat, but not a necessity. With a good layout, such as a forward stateroom and quarter berths, you won't be in each other's way. And if you do feel pinched for space, the money you saved by having this smaller boat could let you afford to rent a hotel room on shore for your parents when they fly in to some exotic location to meet up with you.

During our voyages we had the pleasure of becoming well acquainted with the late Eric and Susan Hiscock, two of the legends of small boat cruising. We spent time on board the three boats they used during their three circumnavigations. Just a few weeks after Eric died, Susan sailed *Wanderer V* to rendezvous with us. Of course we discussed the boats she and Eric had sailed. "*Wanderer III* is definitely my favorite," she said of the 30-footer they had sailed on their first circumnavigation. "I am sorry we got talked into selling her to build 45-foot *Wanderer IV*. We wanted to have a larger boat mainly to have an after-cabin, but after we left the UK the cabin rarely got used, especially not at sea. It was just extra luggage for a boat with two people." Susan candidly went on to say, "This boat (40-foot *Wanderer V*) has never been as much fun to cruise in as our 30-footer. Wish we had never sold her—we could bring her right up to the dock under sail."

You may be told, "This 50-footer is designed with systems that make it easy for two people to handle." And that may be true. But what happens if the windlass fails, or the electric systems needed to power the windlass don't work? Consider taking in the anchor and chain by hand with a strong onshore breeze blowing. If you are ill or have a sprained wrist, or worse, could your wife or sailing partner handle the ground tackle, raise the sails, and get underway? If your engine gave out, could you and your wife short-tack through a relatively narrow harbor entrance? Could you work into a crowded anchorage under just sail? I've spoken with many women sailing on larger boats with their partners who have told me, "I'm not sure what I'll do if something gets out of hand; what if I have to sail this boat alone?"

I've sailed both 24-foot *Seraffyn* and 29-foot *Taleisin* alone, despite neither having engine power. Would I have tried that on a 45-footer? I doubt it. But on these modest-sized boats I found it to be lots of fun. I stepped into the role of captain; I hoisted the mainsail, pulled up the anchor, learned a few more tricks, gained some extra confidence. And because I did, I knew if ever Larry became ill, I could sail for assistance. At night during my watches I could reef, tack, or change jibs alone. That let Larry get more sleep, and be more alert when he was on watch. Remember, there is more to do than just sailing: cooking, navigating, repairing, and sleeping. With only two on board, each person must be able to handle the boat alone. If one or the other does not feel comfortable with this, you need to carry extra crew, especially on long passages. Any feeling of discomfort or unease will inevitably add complications that may end cruises.

Remember how much fun it was to take a little boat, load a lunch on board and shove off for an afternoon sail around the bay? Or to challenge some of the other cruisers in the anchorage to a race to a beautiful skin diving spot? A 30-footer makes a fine daysailor. Forty-five feet is just too much work to get underway. You'll find far more talk about sailing, rather than using engines, among folks in smaller boats. In fact, one of the biggest changes I have seen in the cruising scene over the past 40 years is that when we first started voyaging 95 percent of the other cruising sailors were "out there" because they loved sailing, and 5 percent saw having a sailboat as being an affordable way to explore the world, while today it appears to be the other way around— that is, until you meet up with those cruising in smaller boats.

Then there's boat maintenance. Maintenance becomes a personal problem as you cruise. No longer can you call your favorite, most trusted shipyard, saying, "My boat needs a coat of paint," and sit back as the work is done. In foreign waters you will have to do the work yourself or put up with endless delays, poor quality, and top prices. It's only one day's work to lay a small yacht up against a seawall, let it dry out with the tide, scrub and paint it, and then float free. Just finding professionals to handle the large job takes more than a day of your time and still the work isn't done.

A well-maintained boat is not only investment protection, and safer, but pays unexpected dividends. People judge you by your boat's appearance. So, if your boat is small enough to make maintenance a pleasurable pastime, you are an all-around winner. I really enjoy varnishing three hatches and the cabin sides. It takes one day in the sun. While I was doing the fancy work, Larry enjoyed checking over the rigging and sails, upgrading the few systems we had on board. On average we spent 30 to 35 days a year or two to three days a month on maintenance, including haul-out time. Average maintenance times stated by friends who cruise on 45-footers is four times that, including several weeks in the shipyard after each ocean crossing and a day or two a week each time they are in port. Which really eats into the time you would rather be spending enjoying each new port.

Though it may seem counterintuitive, small boats may actually be safer than larger ones. Many of the financial reasons are obvious: being able to afford better gear and better maintenance, for example. But there are physical and emotional reasons as well. If a strong wind catches your small boat on the beam in a marina, it is possible to shove the boat away from the dock and get an extra fender in place. If someone drags anchor and drifts down on you, you can more easily shove your boat away from their threatening hull. At sea in heavy weather, though the motion can be livelier, it is far easier to furl or douse the headsails, to hoist the storm trysail, or to reef the mainsail. Some folks will say larger boats are safer because you can get across an ocean faster, beat the storms, spend less time at sea. But from our observations and from insurance company records, it's clear that relatively few boats are actually damaged or lost at sea; most come to harm right near land, often due to tired crew making poor decisions.

A small boat means less housework, as well as less overall maintenance. We go cruising to see how others live. Spending all day taking care of the boat is a drag. A typical complaint I hear from those on larger yachts is, "My partner spends two or three days a week taking care of the

electronics, the engine. Steals a lot of the time we could spend exploring together.”

Soon after Hal Roth and his wife Margaret circumnavigated the Pacific the first time, we happened to attend a lecture Hal was presenting in Vancouver. One of the audience asked, “How come you don’t have a boat larger than 35 feet?” Mr. Roth answered, “We cruise to meet people and our boat is almost too large for people to approach. It seems that locals assume that yachtsmen with larger boats aren’t going to be as friendly.”¹

We agree with him completely. We sailed into a tiny yacht harbor in the Limfiord, Denmark, one Saturday afternoon. “Can we tie up next to that blue sloop?” we asked, hoping someone spoke English. “Sure, hand me your line,” said the man on the boat next to us. Then he asked, “Can you be our guests at our yacht club dance tonight?” We accepted with pleasure. Later that evening as I danced with our new friend, I asked, “How come you invited us to this great party before you even tied our dock lines?” He twirled me and said, “I knew that anyone sailing in such a small yacht had to be interesting.”

This has always been our experience. Yet, when we meet people in larger yachts, cruising in the same water, they often comment, “The people here sure aren’t very friendly.”

An unexpected advantage of the smaller boat is that, should you cruise to places that have bitter cold winters, it gives you a reason to move ashore for a few months. It is relatively easy and affordable to find a place to moor a small boat in places like Falmouth England, where we spent two winters while we were cruising around Europe. To avoid the wet and cold of an English winter we rented a warm and cozy fisherman’s cottage which cost £2,500 per month in summer but in the winter only £400. The mooring we rented cost another £30. Our time on shore let us become part of local village life. This is in contrast to two American friends who were cruising on board a 50-footer. Since Fiona and Hank had lots of space on board plus a diesel heating stove they never considered moving on shore. They finally found a liveaboard marina berth for their boat in Southampton at more than double what we were paying for our cottage. They said they actually envied

us. And as Fiona added, “We couldn’t justify moving into an apartment when our boat is so roomy. But I hate carrying groceries out here when the docks are frozen and the wind is howling.”

If after all of the planning and a bit of cruising you find it’s not for you, your small yacht has one last advantage: it’s easier to sell. Or, if you don’t wish to sell it, your investment isn’t so large that you’ll resent putting the boat on a mooring and getting a home ashore.

Length is not the only factor determining a boat’s capacity. Beam increases your space much faster than length does. The 30-foot *Wanderer III* had only eight feet of beam and a relatively short waterline (21’6”) due to the overhanging bow. Our 24-foot *Seraffyn* had nine feet of beam and 22’6” waterline and almost the same volume as *Wanderer III*. *Taleisin*, at 29’6”, had a 10’9” beam and nearly the same volume as many 36-footers. Since it is your overall length that costs more than beam, the beamier boat is a real bargain.

I know that small boats have their disadvantages. You can’t carry two dinghies (one of the few things I might have liked to add to our cruising life). Your guests can’t have a private stateroom. You have to sit down to take a shower. It’s difficult to carry that bicycle or kayak or stand-up paddle board you’d love to have. And there is the human urge to fit in. I know of one friend who did a grand job of creating a 28-foot blue water cruiser from a bare hull. He and his wife set off cruising for two years, exploring the waters of Baja California, crossing the whole Pacific, then onwards to Japan. But he was extremely bothered by one facet of small boat cruising. “Every time we came into a cruising port we were surrounded by folks in 45-footers, 50-footers,” he told us. “They all seemed to feel sorry for us and I hated having to explain why we were sailing in such a small boat, having to tell them we weren’t poor.” This is not something that bothered Larry and me. When we were asked the same question, we had a ready answer: “This size boat means we can afford to own the whole world.” And we could also explain that we had made our decision based on the knowledge Larry had

gained delivering and skippering larger boats, ones ranging from 38 to 60 feet. He understood the costs and maintenance time involved.

If you are still convinced that you need a 45-foot boat, we suggest that you spend the money to charter a boat similar to what you want. Take a three-week cruise with just the two of you. (If you plan to take your kids along, I'd recommend first going with just the two of you, then once again with the kids.) Go out in some bad weather. Pretend the engine doesn't work. Anchor, and then sail off. Let your wife get underway alone while you pretend you have a broken arm. Try tacking into a few of the ports you visit. Once you've seen what it is like to actually handle a boat of this size, check with some different yards as to the cost of hauling and painting. Price a new mainsail. The charter costs will be far less than the broker's commission for buying and then selling a 45-footer. Finally, find a friend with a large yacht. Ask him if you can take charge of scrubbing and anti-fouling the bottom of his boat. Your friend may think you are crazy, but he will appreciate the help. A few long hours of scrubbing and painting may keep you from suffering from the disease we call "being overboarded."

A few sources for information on smaller boats which have proven to be successful offshore cruisers:

Books:

Twenty Small Sailboats to Take You Anywhere by John Vigor

The Sailor's Book of Small Cruising Sailboats: Reviews and

Comparisons of 360 Boats Under 26 Feet by Steve Henkel

Websites:

General information (European-centric): sailboat-cruising.com/cruiser-yachts-under30.html

Just a few of the small production (fiberglass) boats we know have proven to be successful long-distance cruising boats.

Nor'Sea 27 - sailboatdata.com/sailboat/norsea-27

Dana 24 - sailboatdata.com/sailboat/dana-24-pacific-seacraft

Bristol Channel Cutter 28 - sailboatdata.com/sailboat/bristol-channel-cutter

Cape George Cutter 31 - capegeorgecutters.com/31/

Great Dane 28 - sailboatdata.com/sailboat/great-dane-28

Herreshoff 28 - sailboatdata.com/sailboat/h-28-herreshoff

Cheoy Lee 31 - sailboatdata.com/sailboat/offshore-31-cheoy-lee

Pearson Triton 28 - sailboatdata.com/sailboat/triton-pearson

Contessa 26 - sailboatdata.com/sailboat/contessa-26

NOTE: SOME EXTRA THOUGHTS ON BOAT SIZE

Sometimes experience forces you to change your mind. Sometimes it reinforces your opinions.

Since early 2018, I have been voyaging on *Sahula*, a 40-foot sloop.² During the past 14 months we've sailed more than 9000 miles, first around New Zealand, then on to Fiji, Vanuatu, and Australia. We are at the very south of Tasmania as I write this. As we have voyaged, we've met several sailors on boats under 30 feet. The numbers increase if you include young families on boats 34 or 35 feet in length. Many of these sailors are in their late 20s or early 30s.

But since I've been on board *Sahula*, I have found the other cruisers we meet and socialize with most frequently tend to be on bigger boats. This reinforces the idea that average boat length for those cruising has jumped to 45 or 50 feet. But it could be that the *birds of a feather* tendency applies out here on the water. More often we first meet other boats in the 45- or 50-foot range in marinas, or in towns where it is possible to find Internet access, repair services, and access to parts. It is when we head off into quiet isolated coves and to off-the-beaten-track destinations that we come across more voyagers in small boats. And these smaller boats tend to be sailed by

more adventurous types, possibly because they are a younger group, possibly because of many of the reasons suggested in the main article.

How do I feel about the actual physical comforts of this larger boat? Strangely, it makes little difference to my feeling of “being at home” or my willingness to invite people for drinks or dinner. The smaller space on board both *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin* required being more “tidy,” as out-of-place items definitely got in the way. Now I can leave some things lying about when we are at anchor or stashed in temporary spaces while underway. There is more separation between the after stateroom (and a larger bunk) than I used to have. This is nice when one of us wants a quiet place to hide. There definitely is the *appearance* of more space, something I know impresses those who are new to offshore sailing. But I am surprised to find storage is just as much of a problem, partially because folks who build the interiors on smaller boats work harder at creating access to even the smallest potential storage compartment, partially because the larger space allows for lockers that are filled with camping and climbing gear which is used, at most, once every two years, dozens of art books which are rarely opened, and the additional spares needed for gear that might not be found on a smaller boats. Food lockers hold the same four months’ worth of provisions. The main saloon, where cruisers tend to spend the most time, still seats just six in comfort for dinner, same as on 29-foot 9-inch *Taleisin*. The cockpit becomes crowded if more than eight settle in. When we are sailing, the difference in the size of sheets and lines alone reminds me of the advantages of choosing the smaller boat to save money and get out cruising sooner. And when we are bringing the boat alongside a dock, the size difference becomes very apparent to me. *Sahula* is difficult to shove off the dock if the wind is blowing on her beam. With her higher topsides, she is harder to climb off as we come alongside. And as mentioned in the main article, marinas often fill up and, once crowded, don’t have berths for 40-foot boats, while they seem to always find space for smaller ones.

Interestingly, *Sahula*’s owner, David, spent almost ten years wandering along the eastern coast of Australia on a 28-footer when he was younger, including a few years with a wife and baby on board. His search for a boat

to take him on a world voyage when he retired at the age of 60 started in the 28-foot range. But, as David's experience during his quest highlights, in the past 25 years there have been far fewer 25- to 36-foot vessels built for true offshore cruising. Those that were built in the 70s and 80s often need serious upgrading. This has allowed a greater number of younger people to get out sailing affordably; i.e., they buy cheaply and upgrade using skills they gain as they work. David did not have the skills to go this route, however, and so his search took him a different route. He was able to find a ten-ton, 40-foot steel vessel he has come to love at a price he could afford.

You might note I include boats as large as 36 feet in length in these notes for a chapter called 'Thirty Feet Is Enough.' This is because the whole goal of this chapter—in fact the goal for this whole book—is to encourage you to think of the advantages of choosing a smaller boat than modern advertisers are promoting. If you cut your desires back by just a few feet, you might be able to get away sooner, with more money in the bank. You might be able to stay out there longer. You definitely will have lower maintenance costs.

One thing you should remember as you search for a possible cruising boat is that living on board and cruising are two different things. Almost any boat will feel like a poor substitute for even the smallest apartment on shore if you are living in a marina full-time and trying to outfit the boat while having to rush off to a shoreside job. Once you set off cruising the boat will feel much more spacious. You'll spend far less time inside the boat and far more on deck or exploring new places.

1 Interestingly, though Hal later acquired a larger race boat and sailed that around the world, he never sold his 35-footer. Together he and Margaret continued to cruise on *Whisper* until he was nearly 77 years of age.

2 For more about my transition to voyaging on board the 40' Van de Stadt sloop *Sahula* take a look at [chapter 39](#) called 'If It Was Easy...'



SECTION II

How Can I Handle It?

At the heart of any cruise is that wonderful three-thousand-year-old invention, the sailing vessel. This simple machine can be operated by the least educated of people, it uses no fuel, and it allows modern man to feel a sense of both cerebral and physical triumph over the elements.

Learning the basic skills of maneuvering under sail can be an exciting sport. The rewards of self-confidence, achievement, and low costs more than compensate for the time this practice takes. In the ultimate situation, your sailing and seamanship skills could make the difference between success or failure.

In all of the excitement of dreaming about and preparing for a cruise, don't forget the simplest, most important item. It's so basic it sounds corny, but don't forget to learn how to handle your cruising boat under sail.

6

Under Sail without an Engine



Written by Larry

“I couldn’t believe my eyes,” Hale Field told us. “We had just sailed in company from Long Beach to Newport Beach. Peter had done a beautiful job of coming into the visitors’ dock under sail at my home yacht club. When Peter went up to the office and said he wished to stay for four days, he was told he had to move to another berth. Peter didn’t hesitate. He headed down to his boat and a minute later, he and his wife Ann had *Moonraker*’s mainsail up. They shoved off, hoisted the staysail and sailed just 300 yards, without pausing to start their engine.” Hale was one of our early mentors, who had been privileged to cruise, along the shores of southern California, in company with the well-known British cruising sailor Peter Pye. He concluded his story by saying, “When I asked Peter why he hadn’t used the more convenient way—his engine—he stated: “It’s easy to sail on the wide ocean, so I don’t mind powering in a calm. But if I don’t practice sailing in close quarters, I might not be able to when it really matters.”

You too can learn to maneuver your yacht without an engine anywhere there is water to float her. The benefit of practicing to maneuver under sail in close spaces is, should your engine ever fail to start, you will feel empowered to continue on without it. But you must approach close-quarter sailing with forethought, and be prepared for all possible snags.

Each time you plan to moor under sail in an unfamiliar place you should go through these steps. First, take a dry run. In other words, sail near the unfamiliar dock or mooring. Check the local problems, the location of bollards, pilings, other vessels. If you plan on mooring alongside another vessel, use this chance to ask permission. Then sail back to less restricted waters. Now you know the potential problems involved. You have seen what lines or ground tackle you need. You are aware of the local wind and current. During your dry run you have seen how your vessel reacts in the restricted area. You've experienced her handling limitations.

Secondly, now that you have taken the dry run, you can explain to all of your crew what you plan to do, in detail. You have lots of time as you reach back and forth in the less restricted waters. This is very important but the poor skipper rarely remembers to do this. Instead, he blames his hapless uninformed crew when things go wrong. Remember, it is always the skipper's responsibility to make things clear and his fault when the operation fails.

Third, get out necessary gear and delegate individual jobs. In other words, say, "You handle the bow lines. I'll take the stern lines. Charlie, you stand by the jib halyard and be ready to let it go when we come alongside." Then, don't be reluctant to take another trial pass or to size up the problems that may occur. Will I be close-hauled? Will I be running downwind into a narrow channel with no way of bailing out by rounding up into the wind? Or is it the simplest approach of all a beam reach up a wide channel?

Now you know the rules of the game. You can sail up to the dock or mooring, and you know what is involved.

Naturally when sailing in close quarters, knowing how much room you need to tack or gybe and how long your yacht carries when you head into the wind is essential. When you are sailing an unfamiliar or new vessel, it is

wise to spend an hour or two practicing in open waters with a plastic marker buoy. Sail up to the mark, heading into the wind. Does she carry less or more than you expected? Try approaching the marker as though it was a downwind slip, dropping your sails as you approach and covering the last bit under bare poles. Your objective is to arrive at the marker with very little way. I like to watch the wake made by *Taleisin*. I have learned to judge the amount she'll carry by the disturbance she makes. The same type of judgment is needed to come alongside a dock or to anchor in tight spots. Until you can judge the carry of your ship, close-quarter sailing should not be attempted. Remember that not only wind and current and your boat's own mass and momentum will impact the carry of the vessel, but also the condition of your bottom; a foul one will slow you down substantially.





The condition of your bottom determines the boat's carry.

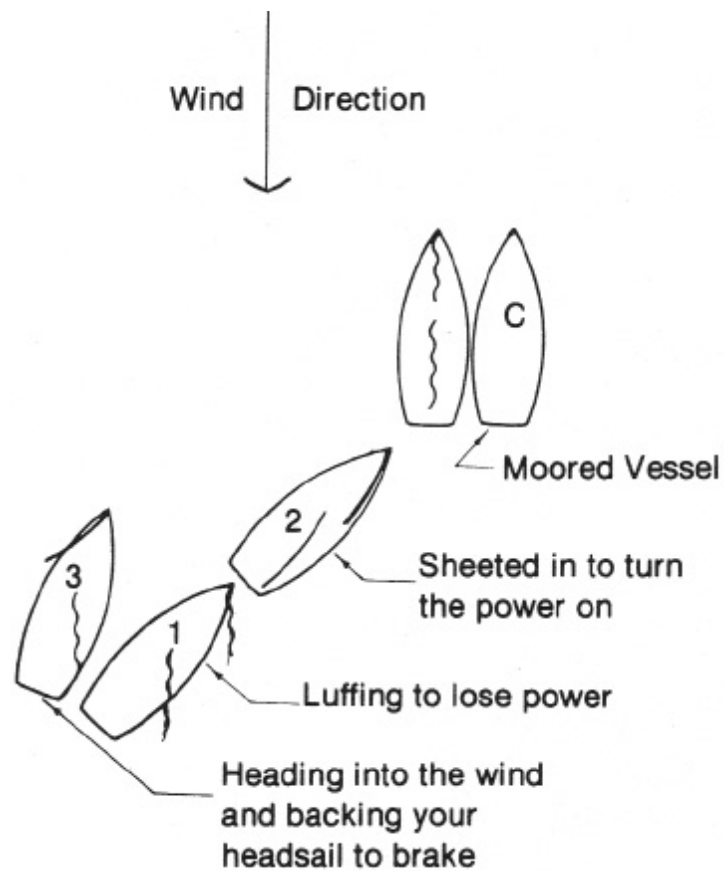


Figure 6.1

When sailing up to a marker buoy you should approach on the leeward or down-current side so that when you pick up the mooring line you are swept slowly away from the buoy and not over it. As you practice you will find you can moor your vessel almost as easily and accurately as you can park your car.

Here are some methods we use to speed up or put on the brakes when sailing our engine-free *Taleisin*. These tricks can be used when the wind is forward of the beam to save an otherwise perfect approach. As shown in (Figure 6.1), yacht number 1: you can ease your sheets and luff. This will slow you down, and by heading closer to the wind you can counteract any leeway. If you lose too much way you can bear off and tighten up the sheets to turn on a bit more wind power (yacht 2). As you come alongside yacht C you can either drop all sail or ease sheets until your sails are luffing, being careful your sheets or main boom do not hang up on yacht C.

If luffing isn't enough to slow you down, you can also head closer to the wind and have a crewman back the jib and/or mainsail (yacht 3). On larger vessels with strong winds this usually requires a strong, tall crewman. By alternately luffing, filling, or backing your sails, you can achieve a surprising amount of control over your speed. But a crowded anchorage is not the place to practice these skills.

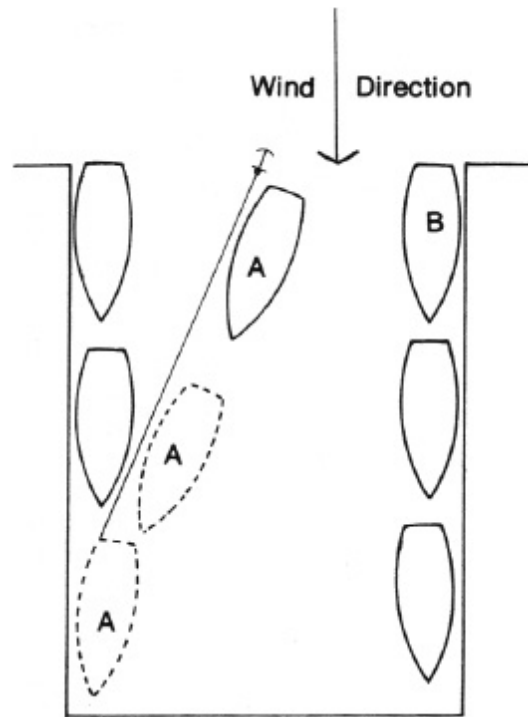


Figure 6.2



Taleisin's stern anchor

Another very efficient braking method used by the Baltic sailors is to have a stern anchor ready before sailing downwind into a narrow channel (Figure 6.2). When A is alongside B, the hook is dropped. In deeper water

the hook should be dropped sooner, considering that a scope of at least three to one is minimum for any anchor to be effective. You then take one turn around a cleat or winch with the anchor line, easing or tightening in order to come into the slip under perfect speed and control. The anchor can be left set to haul you out when you are ready to leave—something we practiced on *Taleisin*, incorporating a stern anchor roller into the boomkin and keeping a stern anchor rigged and ready to go.¹ We also use this trick when we want to haul out on a slipway cradle, slowing our way as we sail in, then setting the anchor again to haul ourselves off with it when the work is done.

Once you've learned to control your speed, the next step is to practice bringing your yacht alongside another vessel. If you can, find a small anchored barge or a sympathetic friend with a yacht on a permanent mooring well clear of other vessels or obstructions. With fenders and mooring lines rigged, sail alongside, being careful to head into the wind or current. A few dozen passes and you will probably be able to have a good landing each time. Naturally, the more varied the wind and tide strengths you sail in, the greater your confidence and ability will become.

Now that you can come alongside under sail, you should also be able to sail away. If you can, raise your main and preset your mainsheet to a close-reaching position. Have the jib ready to haul up. Remove the bow line and, as the wind carries your bow away from the barge, clear the stern line and give your stern a good shove. Now that you are close-reaching slowly, hoist your jib and you are underway. If your vessel doesn't sail well under main alone, then hoist the main and jib prior to casting off your bow line. As soon as you are clear and the main is full and by, you can sheet in the flapping jib. But remember: be sure your crew knows what you are going to do and how you are going to do it before casting off your lines.

When you feel you can confidently lay up to and sail away from a moored vessel, you should progress to laying alongside more crowded docks and quays.

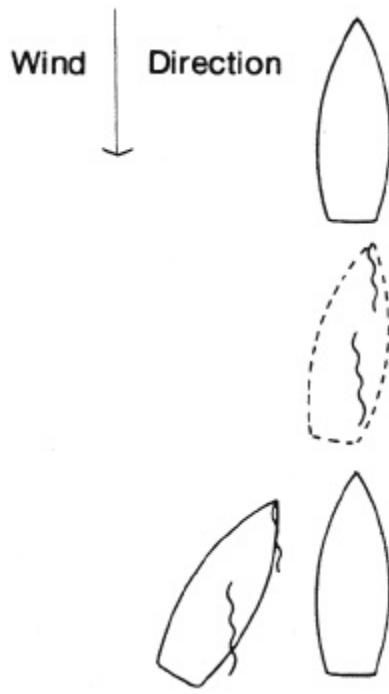


Figure 6.3

One of the most challenging situations is sailing up to a quay which has only one small space left between two boats ([Figure 6.3](#)). Your way must be accurately judged to allow you enough steerage to turn into the dock, clear the downwind yacht, and avoid running into the windward yacht. The most prudent way to do this if conditions are difficult (strong wind or strong tide) is to ask permission and then sail alongside the windward yacht and warp aft to the vacant dock space. With the wind forward this is quite simple, even for large vessels.

Sailing out of this spot would be very much like sailing away from the anchored yacht in rough conditions. Assuming you are tied starboard to as in ([Figure 6.3](#)), a starboard line is doubled up to the port quarter of the windward yacht. In other words, cleat one end of the line on board, pass it around the port quarter cleat of the vessel to windward, and then bring the end back on board. This will allow you to pull your vessel to windward as your bow falls off and your sails fill on the starboard tack. As you gather way you can let go of the end of your line and it will run clear. Then you can

coil it back on board at leisure. Don't use a line with an eye-spliced end as it usually won't run free.

Whenever you have to sail out of a tight situation, you should always consider using warps or ground tackle—especially if you are shorthanded. In the situation shown in (Figure 5.4), one of us would row out an anchor and then winch out to clear water and sail off the anchor. It's by far the safest way unless you have plenty of strong crew to give you a good shove to windward, clear of vessel A.

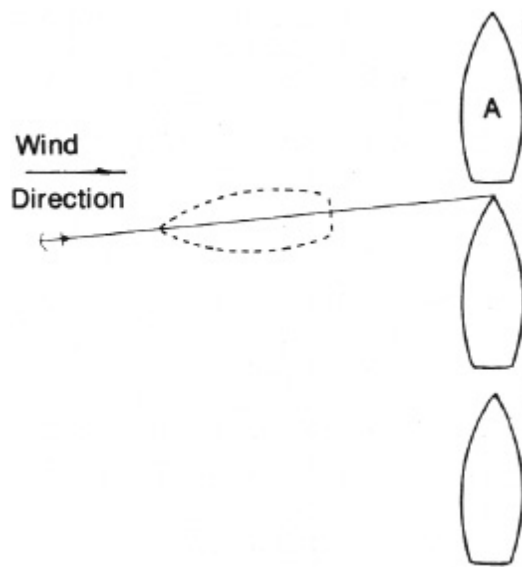


Figure 6.4

Anchoring under sail is very simple when you know how much way is carried by your vessel. You simply select a clear spot with enough swinging room to take care of your scope. Explain to your crew what you are doing. For example: "We'll head into the wind and should fetch up about 100 yards astern of that blue sloop." If you lose way and find you've misjudged, don't be reluctant to bear off and take another pass so you can spot your anchor exactly where you hope to in the first place. You might lose a little face with your crew, but it will be much less painful than having to get up in the middle of the night when the tide swings you onto a nearby vessel.

When sailing off the anchor, the trick is to get steerage way as soon as possible. If it is a large, deserted anchorage, no problem. But a crowded spot

with other yachts close by requires good planning before you sail off. Think your plan through, then tell your crew, “If I back the jib just as the anchor is raised, the bow will swing to leeward. That will put us on the port tack and keep us clear of the boat anchored to port.” In close quarters it is a good idea to have your jib and main hoisted when your hook comes up. This allows you to accelerate and gain way much faster and is therefore safer. Keeping enough way in a crowded anchorage is essential. If you lose steerage and end up in stays, the current or wind can set you down on other vessels.

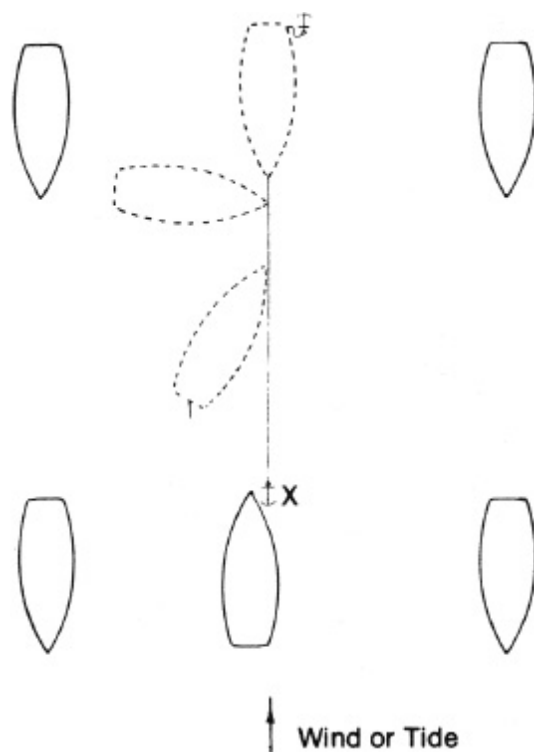


Figure 6.5

In order to anchor in a crowded spot, such as in (Figure 6.5) with the wind aft, drop your main and sail in under jib alone, in stronger winds under bare poles. On your dry run you will have looked over the situation and decided where to put your hook down. You should also have done a check to see how far the boat carried when you headed into the wind, i.e., how much momentum she had. After your dry run, when you are ready for your final approach, your ground tackle should be all rigged and ready to let go.

One of the crew drops the anchor at X, paying out chain slowly as the anchor starts to bite in. You swing the rudder to turn to starboard if your chain roller is on the starboard side, to port if it is on the port side. This swings the vessel's bow away from the chain so you don't override and mess up your topsides. As you do this the movement of the boat automatically sets your hook, and if other vessels are lying to bow and stern anchors, you can fall aft paying out twice the amount of bow rode you need. Then you drop your stern hook and draw back on the bow rode until you are securely anchored right in the middle of your two anchors. You've done it completely under sail without having to get in the dinghy and row out your tackle. When it's time to leave, you simply reverse the procedure to pick up the stern hook.



When we are sailing in close quarters, we keep the anchor stowed as in the photo, so it is ready for immediate use and easy re-stowage. It would pay to organize a similar, easy-stowing method if you're sailing shorthanded.

Handling warps and ground tackle is almost a lost art. Rarely do we see anyone set a beam anchor to hold their yacht off a nasty dock or quay. Nor do we see people using a warping line to maneuver into tight quarters. Warping is hard work unless you have proper ground tackle and good warping lines which are kept so they are convenient and easy to use.

Three-strand lines are almost impossible to use quickly if they form kinks. Bert Darrell, a well-known practical sailor and owner of a yacht yard in Hamilton, Bermuda, taught me a very useful trick to cure them. His solution: "Starting with one end, coil the line backwards (counterclockwise), letting the kinks fall as they may in an ever-widening coil. When the line has all been coiled, pick up the starting end from the center of the coil and recoil it in the proper clockwise direction. Repeat these steps until all of the kinks disappear." We've tried this and it works very well.

Lines that don't run smoothly or that foul when you need them can be dangerous, especially when you are in close quarters. Another trick was taught to us by an English sailor as we went through the Panama Canal using four 150-foot lines to position the boat in the center of the locks. He coiled his lines in a figure of eight on deck with the coil at right angles to the fairlead ([Figure 6.6](#)). All of the lines ran smoothly without snagging or looping around themselves. Long hawsers can then be conveniently stored by tying marlin with quick-releasing reef knots around the center of the figure of eight and at the top and bottom and then folding them in half. Your hawsers are then quick and easy to use.

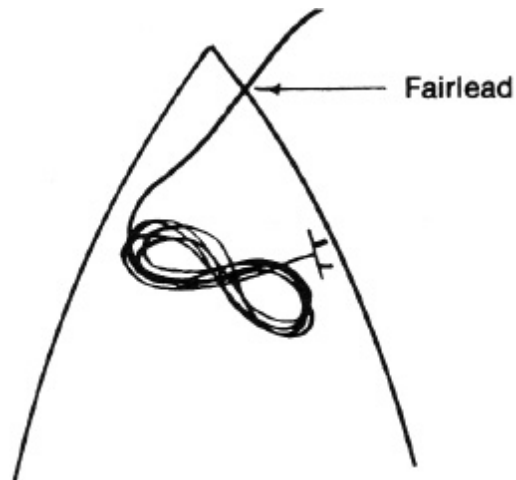


Figure 6.6

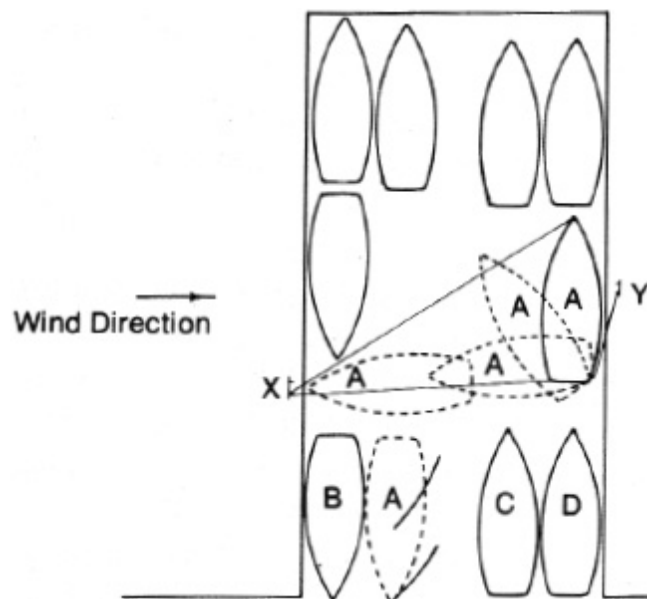


Figure 6.7

If you use three-strand line which we have always preferred for many reasons besides the cost savings and longevity, these two tricks can help your warping immensely by speeding up your maneuvers and giving you the satisfaction of a job that runs without a hitch. If instead you use braid or 8-strand line for warps, it will not kink but can easily foul if you do not 'figure 8' it.

Warping out of a very crowded anchorage can always be done with safety if you have sufficient lines and fenders. If the wind is fresh in the situation illustrated in (Figure 6.7), you could have great difficulties coming out, even under power. With only a bit more effort you could warp out in style—and complete safety.

Vessel A rows one line from her port bow and one from her port stern to bollard X, leaving one after-spring line to hold position. Bow and stern lines are then winched in, pulling the vessel sideways to windward. When you are clear of the dock, winch the bow to windward, being careful to fend off vessels C and D. Adjust your bow line so you can step off your transom to retrieve your spring line from bollard Y. Now you can use your bow line to warp over to bollard X. Using hand lines and fenders, work alongside vessel B. Coil your warps, have a cup of tea, and when you are relaxed and read to go, hoist your sails, and reach off into the blue. All this maneuver requires is keeping cool and sorting out what you are going to do beforehand.

We have watched countless sailors losing their cool as they tried to use only their engine to settle into what is called a Mediterranean Moor; i.e., bow held by an anchor, stern tied to a quay. The techniques used while sailing engine-free can definitely help here. If you are planning to anchor stern to a quay or dock using just sail power, you should drop your anchor dead to windward of the vacant berth, leaving your mainsail set and paying out chain slowly. As you settle aft toward the berth and the wind or current sets you to one side or the other, you can steer your vessel by pushing your mainsail boom to windward, either port or starboard. If the wind is on the beam, or if a current is setting you towards another boat, set your anchor and row a line into the dock. Then warp in as you pay out your anchor chain. This way you avoid fouling other vessels. If the wind is at right angles to the dock, you can anchor with a minimum scope, then row your long warp ashore and attach it to a bollard. Then ease your bow anchor while winching in your stern. Even in strong winds this can be accomplished with little difficulty and complete control.

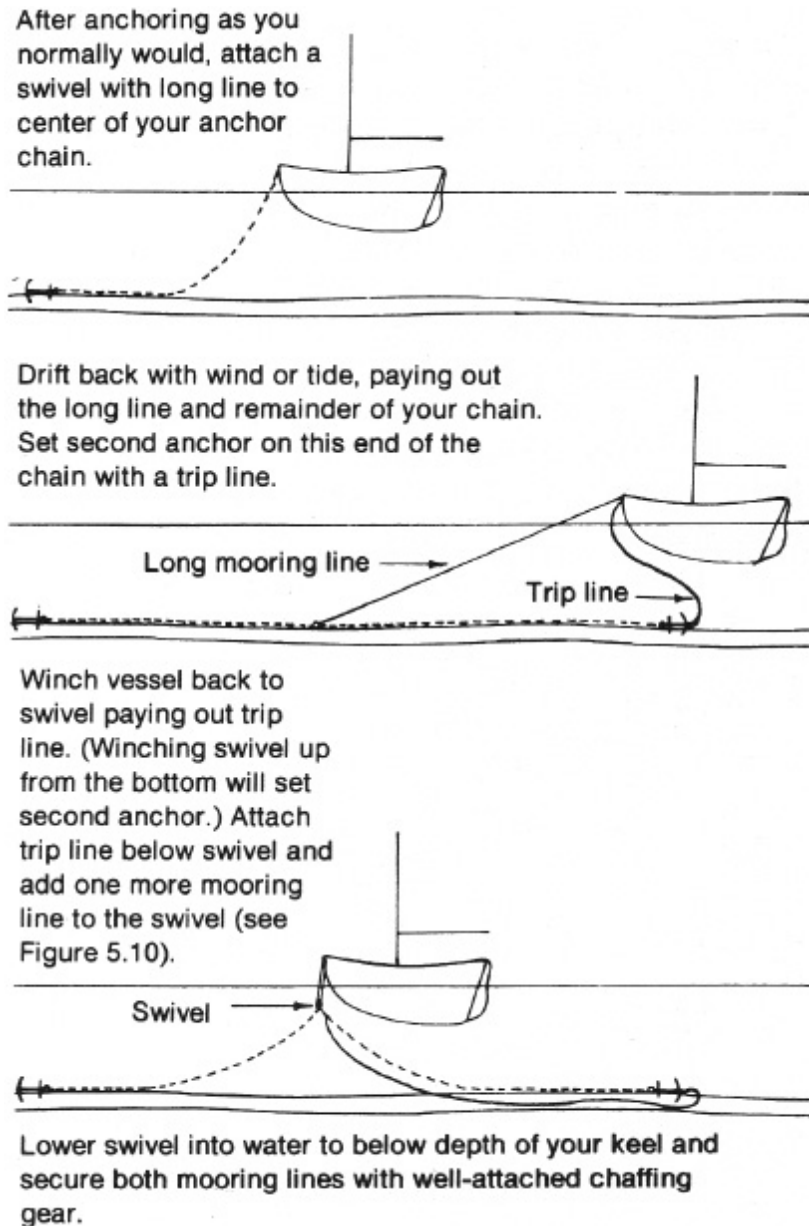


Figure 6.8

To set a permanent mooring under sail alone ([Figure 6.8](#)), drop your anchor and drift back with the wind or tide, paying out half of the chain you have (on *Taleisin* half was 150 feet). At the midpoint set a swivel with a long mooring line leading to it. Then drift back again, letting out the rest of your chain. When you reach the bitter end, attach your second large anchor and drop it overboard with a trip line attached. Then use the first long line to pull yourself back to the swivel. Attach two large-diameter nylon lines to

the swivel with properly moused (seized) shackles ([Figure 6.9](#)). Secure the trip line to the chain near the swivel and lower the swivel until it is below the level of your keel. Secure the two mooring lines with good chafing gear attached.

We also carried a 16-foot oar (sweep) on *Taleisin* which let us scull into or out of many windless tight spots. This let us scull out of narrow channels; either of us could move an 8-ton boat at 1-1/2 knots in calm waters (see [Chapter 13, Section 4: Oar Power](#)).

Practice under sail alone, and you will find more pleasure in each day afloat—plus feel more empowered and less frustrated should your engine falter. The benefits go beyond this because you will be forced to keep all of your sailing gear, ground tackle, and warps in good working order. The more you use them, the more reliable they are. The more you sail, the more skilled you become. And conversely, the more you use an engine, the more it wears and the more likely it is to fail!

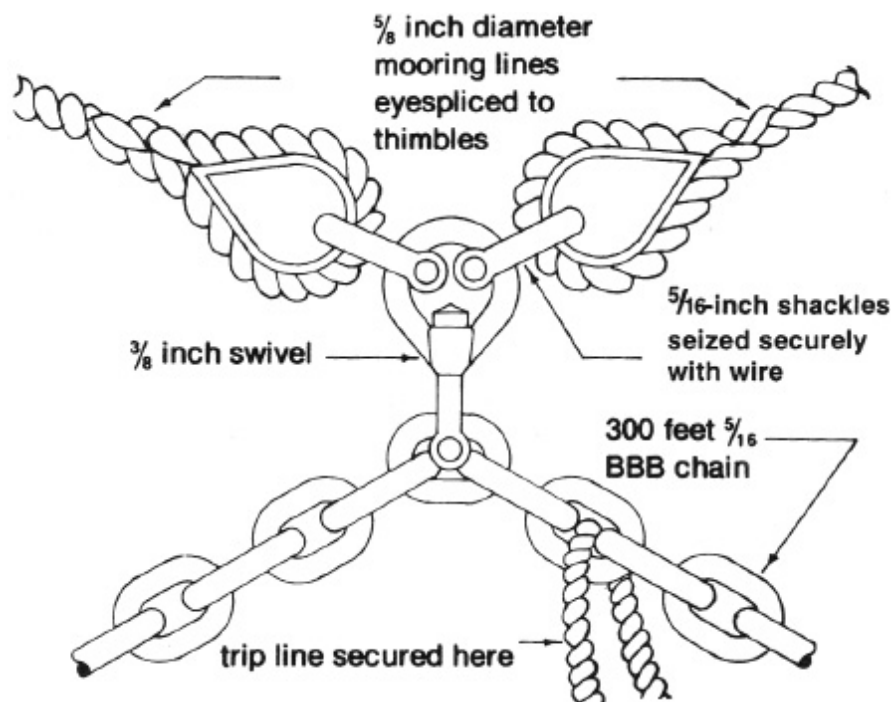


Figure 6.9

[1](#) See more about this in the chapter called ‘Stern-Anchor Systems in Capable Cruiser.’

7

Be Prepared to Use Your Sail Power



Written by Larry

For the person who wants to feel more self-sufficient, engines should be considered a convenience on an auxiliary sailboat, not a necessity. Sailing vessels have been handled without them for centuries. More than three centuries ago the British Navy blockaded Napoleon's French coast for twenty years. They never lost a ship except in battle, though they patrolled the English Channel and Bay of Biscay in all weather, winter and summer, working close to shore and sailing in what we would consider to be extremely clumsy, un-weatherly vessels. Surely we can safely sail our outside-ballasted, close-winded yachts at ideal times of the year without depending on an engine to get us out of bad situations.

Time and time again, we've watched people waste cruising time in miserable harbors waiting for parts to arrive for their engine. With confidence in their sailing ability, they could have sailed on to a larger, more pleasant port where parts and service would be available—and they would

have had fine cruising along the way. The suggestions that follow will help you be prepared to enjoy your cruising, whether your engine works or not.

1. Have all of your sailing gear in good order with plenty of spares on board. Have extra food and water in case you are delayed. A simple sailboat should not be hard to keep shipshape. Unlike the problems associated with faltering engines, most potential problems with sails, masts, spreaders, hulls, and rudders can be checked by eye or touch.

2. More important, after you clear port, get a good offing. The greatest danger to a sailboat is the land, not the sea. Very few of the large commercial sailing ships foundered at sea. Most of them were driven ashore due to poor windward ability and an inadequate offing. The required distance that is good enough varies with wind strength, direction, and sea conditions. If you are coasting and the wind is off the land, you can stay quite close to the shore. If the wind increases to a gale, you can go in and anchor. But if you do anchor in an open roadstead be careful that the wind doesn't swing and drive you ashore. When we are in this position with an unsteady barometer, I'd put two reefs in the main, then set the alarm clock for every two hours in case the wind veers or backs. It could be disastrous to be awakened by Force 8 onshore winds and a nasty sea.

If the wind is blowing onto the land, plot a course that keeps you at least two or three miles offshore, even in the lightest breezes with a steady glass and good weather report.

If the wind increases to Force 6 or 7, head farther offshore, especially if you aren't making port. Twenty-five or 35 miles is a fair margin, but I would keep working offshore because the wind could increase more. The farther off, the safer you are. Once you have at least 60 or 70 miles between you and a lee shore, you can heave to and wait for the winds to moderate.¹

3. Heaving to is the classic safety valve of the sailing vessel. If you keep well to windward and become tired, you can stop and rest. You can heave to and wait for morning or till fog clears to run in on your landfall. During *Seraffyn's* sea trials we left at 1900 one day to sail to Fisherman's Cove, Catalina Island, California. Lin was practicing her navigation, and when we approached the island two hours before dawn, she elected to heave

to and wait because she just didn't like the way things looked in comparison with the chart. It was a good decision, as the bay was blocked with a temporary log boom that was being used in some marine biology experiment—not exactly the thing to run into at night.

4. To sail without relying on your engine you need a boat that will go to windward when necessary, even in gale conditions. You need easy reefing and good strong storm sails, plus real familiarity with your gear *before* the storm conditions are upon you.

5. Keep to windward! What a temptation it is to ease off the wind and roar along on a beam reach, rather than staying close-hauled gaining to windward. No matter how tempting, don't start your sheets on a long haul if the wind is forward of the beam. Always keep about 10 degrees or 15 degrees to windward of your rhumb line. If the wind falls aft of the beam you can safely sail your rhumb line course. Many times I have been tempted into easing my sheets and close-reaching, only to be headed, and then I've had to make several tacks to clear a headland or make port.

6. Sailing without depending on your auxiliary requires thinking ahead. The prudent single-engine pilot is always looking for a patch of decent ground to land on in case his engine fails, especially when he is flying over unknown territory. An alert sailor should do the same, looking at his chart and checking ahead for the depths and bottom conditions near shore in case that nice offshore breeze dies. If you know you can anchor ahead (shoaling water and sand bottom), it is safe to stay near the land. But if the chart shows deep water, steep to the shore, and a rocky coast, keep a good offing. Remember your ace in the hole when sailing with or without an engine is your ground tackle.

Once, I saw a sailor motoring in a light breeze within 25 yards of a steep-to, rocky headland which was a prevailing lee shore. There was a long, large, onshore swell. He had his sun cover over the boom, mainsail furled and covered, the jib and anchor stowed below. What faith he had in his engine! Just a bit of water or dirt in his fuel and the engine could have died, giving him no time to get sailing or even to anchor.

7. Keep clear of high large points of land because major headlands often have unusual effects. They can create strong currents, sudden downdraughts, or a blanketing effect that eliminates your nice breeze. Just a week into our very first cruise I got in trouble this way. We sailed into the lee of Isla Guadalupe, leaving only about a ¼ mile between us and the northern point of the island. We had our full mainsail, staysail and 100 percent jib set, after two days of reaching along in the lovely 15-knot Pacific northwesterly. The 3,000-foot high cliffs of this narrow island caused a fierce williwaw that laid us cabin-sides awash before we could react. Water poured through the open companionway and I prayed as I shoved the helm down. *Seraffyn* rounded surely into the wind and I was able to douse most of the sails, but not before we had 50 gallons of sea water below. I had learned my lesson.

8. Learn to use tides and currents to your advantage. The merchant sailing men had to plot their voyages to deliver cargo where it was wanted as quickly as possible and usually weren't able to use the classic round-the-world tradewind route. So they learned to recognize and use every favorable current. They were able to sail in and out of ports and places today's cruising sailors rarely attempt.

For coastal sailing in places with a large rise and fall of tide, you have to schedule your movements with the help of a good tidal almanac. On long passages, the ocean's currents can also be used to great advantage. One passage we made in *Seraffyn* that I am particularly proud of was from the Panama Canal to Kingston, Jamaica, via Cartagena, Colombia. A year previously, when we'd delivered a large motor vessel from Mexico to San Diego, California, we met up with the late Eric Hiscock on board *Wanderer IV*. I discussed our cruising plans with him. We planned to cruise to Panama and from there to the east coast of the United States. Eric's comment was, "I wouldn't try that passage in a straight sailing boat. The wind is against you, the Gulf Stream is against you, and we have spent more time running under bare poles in the Caribbean than anywhere else!" I took this into consideration and sewed a third reef into our mainsail. We left Panama and the usual northeast tradewind was blowing, so we beat along the

Panamanian shore using the Caribbean countercurrent (1½ knots average) on our stern all the way to Cartagena, Colombia. We gained much-needed easting this way. By studying the pilot charts for each month we learned that the prevailing northeast trades swing more to the east in late spring. We left in May with wind from the east, heading 25 degrees high of our rhumb line to counteract the Gulf Stream. We made our landfall four miles to windward of Kingston, five days and five hours later (480 miles). We used the British Admiralty publication *Ocean Passages for the World* and the American pilot charts to turn an extremely difficult beat to windward against the Gulf Stream into one close-reaching tack and averaged 95 miles per day in our 24-foot cutter.

9. Don't miss a fair wind. In Gibraltar we watched numerous cruising people who wanted to sail west to the Canaries, staying in port because it was blowing a Force 7 easterly with heavy gusts in the harbor. The weather forecasts stated that these gusts were only local. The barometer was steady. But these sailors were timid and waiting for perfect conditions. By the time they left, the easterly winds quit and the prevailing southwesterly Force 4 or 5 set in. So they had to beat against 2 to 3 knots of easterly current or power into the choppy seas caused by wind against current.

When you are under sail you must be ready to leave the instant the winds are fair, day or night, not always when it's most comfortable.

10. Be prepared to sail in light winds. Don't conclude you need a lightweight, specially tuned raceboat to move in light winds—even moderately heavy boats can become far more sprightly if you can add large, light-wind sails, use a folding propeller, and keep bottom clean. Our logbooks show about 46 days of complete calm during more than 205,000 miles of voyaging with almost 150,000 of that done engine-free. This would probably equal the hours spent just maintaining a diesel engine. But each of the boats we've cruised has been designed with a large rig so the boat would sail well in light winds. We've always carried a nylon drifter that had the equivalent area to a 150 percent genoa, plus a full-sized spinnaker. They definitely came in handy as we found we spent about 60 percent of our time cruising in winds of less than 12 knots.



On *Taleisin*, we carried a 650 square foot nylon drifter (150% light air genoa) plus a 250 square foot nylon staysail for light air sailing.

Light-air sailing with little or no sea is definitely the most comfortable and enjoyable. You are making 80 to 90 miles a day. The windvane is steering happily. It's warm and dry and the boat is moving like a magic carpet as you lounge back and quietly read a good book. The majority of cruising people miss these idyllic conditions because to them winds of Force 2 or 3 mean "being becalmed." To move well without using your

engine in light conditions, you have to work harder at sailing your boat. You must have light-air sails and be rigged to control them properly. You must be able to reef quickly and easily when the time comes; i.e., jiffy reefing, jib downhaul, and lazy-jacks for the mainsail. And you also must keep your bottom clean and reasonably smooth.

If you are going downwind or reaching in very light winds with a lumpy leftover sea, and your mainsail starts to back and slat, you can set a large nylon drifter and drop the main. You'll move just as fast. The drifter will just pant instead of slatting and chafing. When we are reaching without the mainsail, we sheet the drifter just as we would a genoa, but when running we lead the drifter through a block on the end of the main boom and secure the boom forward with the preventer vang. For someone alone on deck this is usually easier to set up than the spinnaker pole. You can also use your spinnaker alone in very light conditions, but I wouldn't recommend carrying it without the mainsail set in anything but the lightest winds as you might have trouble getting it down.

If you'd enjoy the sport of sailing without an expensive inboard engine, but your cruising time is limited and you have to be home for work on Monday morning, consider an economical solution: a sculling oar or an outboard motor for your dinghy. Tie your inflatable tender or hard dinghy alongside with good fenders and putt your way through that calm. We've watched sailing boats up to 35 feet long being maneuvered around harbors and at sea this way

11. You must sail defensively. Only two or three times have I thought I needed an engine and I realize now that these were times when I was not sailing defensively. After we had transited the Kiel Canal in northern Germany by hitching a tow from a fishing boat, we left Cuxhaven with a strong fair tide flushing us out the river Elbe. The wind was from the northwest so we could just make our course. We had gone 20 miles when the wind lightened and the tide started to turn. We weren't gaining over the ground so decided to work outside the deep channel and anchor in about two fathoms behind the marker buoys until the tide changed. The ships were bumper to bumper. We attempted to squeeze through two or three times,

only to tack back into the channel as ships bore down on us. Finally we made our bid. Suddenly we saw the red and green lights of a large coaster's masthead lights in line, and we barely had steerage. As the ship steamed down on us, I was sure we were in for a collision. I flashed our large torch on the mainsail, and Lin ran down and got the fog horn and started blasting away. The coaster cleared our stern by 50 feet. We soon safely anchored in 2 fathoms outside the channel. My mistake was that I hadn't studied the charts before I left. Had I done so I would have realized we could stay completely out of the way of large ships by sailing in waters that were just 2 fathoms deep *outside* the buoyed channel. If you study the charts beforehand you can elect to stay well clear of traffic separation zones in areas such as Ushant, Finisterre, English Channel approaches, and the Straits of Florida.

12. Even if you have an AIS transponder on board to alert you to ships that might be nearby, carry a large torch and use it to alert ships to your presence and if necessary to flash a D signal on your mainsail (Morse code - - .. meaning "I am maneuvering with difficulty, keep clear"). Also make sure your running lights are easily visible and burning all night.

We carried both a battery-powered high-intensity flashlight (torch) and one that plugged into our solar-powered electrical system for this purpose. We also carried an LED strobe light which operates on two D cell batteries. We hoisted this on its own flagstaff so it was well above the masthead when we were hove-to, in order to supplement our regular running lights. Ships have confirmed it is visible for up to four miles with clear skies, up to ½ mile in fog. Although a white strobe light is not specified by shipping regulations, it is not illegal in any way under COLREGS (the international avoidance of collision regulations). The regulations call for using any possible means other than distress signals to help alert other vessels to your presence.

13. Finally, be careful of being towed. If you sail without an engine or your engine breaks down, you might be offered a tow someday. But try to avoid this because you will rarely know the ability of the man or vessel offering assistance. Few people in power vessels realize how much way a sailboat carries nor the effect of windage on a mast and rigging. If you do

need a tow, give the other boat your line and be able to release your end quickly. Also, have your anchor ready. When you accept a tow in close quarters, the motorboat should tie alongside with propeller slightly aft of your rudder for better control.

If you lose your mast or rudder and need a tow, be sure you arrange the price at sea and get it on paper. When we were in Malaga, Spain, we met a sailor with a 30-foot cutter who'd been dismasted off Torremolinos. He was well offshore and in no immediate danger, but his engine would not start so he signaled a fishing boat and asked him for a tow into Malaga. When they arrived in port the fisherman asked for US\$400 for one hour's towing—not really a lot. The yachtsman didn't have the ready cash so the fisherman was held in port for three full days getting a lien on the boat. The final outcome was that the port authorities awarded the fisherman \$3,000 for the tow and the fishing time lost. The yachtsman had to pay this total amount before he was allowed to carry on cruising. Whatever the situation, remember you are trusting your vessel to someone else's seamanship the minute you take a tow.

I have delivered many auxiliary yachts and I find myself turning on the motor when the boat's speed drops below 3 knots, even when the owner is not in a particular hurry to have his boat in a specific place, even when I do not have a tight schedule. I use all sorts of excuses to cover up what is sometimes just laziness. Instead of getting out the light weather sails, I take the easy way and mindlessly power along, hoping the wind will freshen. When I get into port, I definitely miss the feeling of accomplishment that comes from making a passage under sail.²

Use your diesel to charge batteries, pump bilges, and get you in and out of marina berths, but practice using sail power as much as possible. I guarantee your self-esteem and sailing ability will improve immensely as you learn to make ocean passages completely under sail.

¹ For more on heaving to read *Storm Tactics Handbook* by Lin and Larry Pardey

2 A book such as this third edition of *Self-Sufficient Sailor* is a truly cooperative effort, from writing to editing to getting it all in print (or into electronic files) so the reader can fully enjoy it. I (Lin) couldn't resist adding this note from my editor, Michelle Elvy, who has been cruising for almost 20 years with her husband and two children: "We are known among our friends for the 44-day passage from Mexico to French Polynesia—a trip that should take 20-24 days, really. Why did it take us so long? Because we refused to be rushed offshore, and we really enjoy being at sea. On that leg, we spent a good two weeks at the equator, moving back and forth with the current and no real wind to speak of. Our kids were 3 and 6. It was one of the most bonding family memories we have had: no urgency to get anywhere, a total sense of calm as we drifted and waited for *Momo* to slip far enough south for the wind to whisper back into our lives, and then elation when it did and we starting making 1, then 2 knots in the right direction again. It's not so much that sense of accomplishment but it certainly maintained the tone for that passage and every one since: settle into the pace and enjoy what comes. And we never, *ever* turn on the motor on passages. It's sort of a family principle; we're not very principled about much else! And it works—when we go offshore, we all relax and settle into an attitude that is very hard to describe but that is wholly satisfying and results in the ultimate feeling of contentment.

As an aside, we have developed a sort of 'habit' (call it superstition, except we are not superstitious at all) of sailing off the anchor, always, for a longer passage. We set the tone by that challenge: we don't begin any long passage with the engine—we sail from the very start. And we often end with sailing, too—start to stop, no engine. What a feeling to arrive on the other side of an ocean and drop anchor without ever having heard our engine. Bliss.



SECTION III

Cruising Is a Sharing Proposition

The vast majority of cruising boats are owned and sailed by couples. In many cases, it is the male partner who has the stronger mechanical skills, the most sailing experience. This can inadvertently lead to an imbalance on board, one that sneaks up and unsettles your life afloat. The chapters in this section discuss some ways to create the type of partnership that will keep your ocean voyaging dream a shared one.

The third chapter shares some tips on getting to know the people you'll meet along the way, people who can become lifelong friends.

8

It Could be Worth Your Life to Teach Your Wife (or Partner)



The shower room at the Royal Tasmanian Yacht Club was unusually crowded. Forty-five crews were in port, preparing their boats for the imminent departure of the 2019 Round Van Diemen Island Cruise. I was looking forward to one last long hot shower before setting sail to meander leisurely south through the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. As I waited for a shower stall, I listened to the conversations flowing around me. Some of the women were excited, but a surprisingly large number were not. "Only doing this because B... insisted," said one. Another added, "I am really hoping the crew we are taking can back J up. I sure don't know how to."

Although more women are involved in all aspects of sailing than they were when I first set off 50 years ago, these conversations reminded me that even today it is more often the male partner who comes up with the idea of setting off cruising. Now, even as back then, for every wife or partner who loves sailing and plans for each voyage with enthusiasm and excitement, there are at least three who go cruising only because they are trying to please their mate. There are another ten who won't even consider going

beyond local waters and probably five times that number who aren't interested in going sailing at all, not even for a balmy afternoon.

Although it would be easy to place all of the blame on the female side, I feel that far too often this problem is caused by men who don't encourage their partners to learn anything but the basics of sailing.¹

Consider the husband who says, "My partner is welcome to learn all she wants. I let her take the helm when I'm pulling up the anchor." A few minutes on the helm every once in a while doesn't translate into the hours of sailing needed to gain skills and confidence—for a man or a woman. Any way you slice it, a cruising boat is an impossible place for a beginner to learn to sail.

I recently met a couple living on a 35-foot sloop. They had wandered around together for a year and yet Shirley had never hoisted the mainsail by herself. From the first, her role had been to start the engine and then hold the wheel. When I asked Grant why he had not encouraged Shirley to learn more about handling their boat, he said, "It's easier to do it myself. By the time I show Shirley how to use the halyard winch properly, I can have the sails set and drawing."

Another man said his partner didn't need to learn how to work the anchor winch. "She's got enough to keep her busy taking care of us. Why should she learn to set an anchor?"

And the most common complaint I hear from women who don't really know how to sail their cruising home is: "Every time I try to take the helm he nags me: you're pinching, the sail is luffing, you're off course."

Tremendous dividends can be gained by really encouraging your partner to learn all she can about sailing, preferably by taking a learn-to-sail course with a group of other women. If she knows how to short-tack up a river, how to adjust and reef the mainsail, and the basics of navigation, sailing is bound to be more interesting for her.

Sailing will also be less frightening when your partner knows what to do in tight situations. I'll never forget how, during the early days of our voyaging life, I froze stiff with fear when, during a storm with wind gusts of 50 knots or more, Larry released the staysail sheet in preparation for

shortening sail. The staysail snapped and flogged, shaking the boat from stem to stern. Larry had it down and bagged only minutes later, with the boat riding easily hove-to under a deeply reefed mainsail. Had I been on deck able to help him and aware of what exactly was happening, I'd have expected the noise and realized it didn't represent danger.

Knowing the more technical aspects of sailing will make your partner aware of the safety built into a proper cruising yacht. She'll be able to look at your cruising home and say, "Yes, this boat is strong and safe." Confidence in your boat will again make sailing more enjoyable for both of you.

Once your partner knows how to sail your boat well in most conditions, you will be able to sleep soundly on your off-watches. If you are confident that she will wake you before the boat is overburdened in a squall or before you get too close to a lee shore, you will really be able to enjoy your bunk time. Every time your partner has to wake you to change course or tack or shake out a reef, you lose a half hour's sleep. On a long voyage this can make the difference between a wise decision or a fatigued one when you reach your landfall.

However, the most important reason I'm glad that Larry taught me to sail well is that I was far more comfortable with the fact that there could come a time when I had to be able to take complete control due to a sudden health issue that might leave him unable to sail the boat. Or, translated, it could have been worth his life that I be able to sail *Seraffyn* or *Taleisin* completely by myself. I had to put this to the test when we were anchored in a relatively isolated spot in the outer islands of the Finnish archipelago near Turku on board *Seraffyn*. Larry started having severe stomach pains. He was normally healthy as a bull so I was rightly worried. I rowed into a small trading post and called a doctor. From the symptoms I described, she diagnosed possible kidney stones and said to start sailing towards Turku immediately as the Coast Guard was occupied with a pregnant woman on another island. We had painkillers on board and after Larry had one, I set sail. I ran 30 miles that afternoon, weaving through the islands and past rocky outcroppings and then anchored in an open cove for the night rather

than try to navigate through the small channels in the dark. The next day I beat into Nagu and the doctor immediately sent Larry off to a hospital. Fortunately, Larry had something far less serious than kidney stones, but, had I not known how to get the anchor up and the sails set, we would have had to wait for a doctor to be shipped out or a passing coaster to stop.

Several years after that event, we met an older couple cruising in the Gulf of California. Six months later we heard that they were beating northward along the Baja California coast, when the husband went forward to change a sail. He dropped dead of a heart attack. By good fortune his wife knew how to sail well enough to run 150 miles back to Bahia Magdalena where the local fishermen gave her assistance.

Teaching your partner how to handle your boat under power isn't sufficient. It might work if you are fortunate enough to have your accidents close to civilization, but your boat might not have the fuel capacity to continue under power for 600 or 700 miles. It will be important for your partner to be able to sail your boat and save the fuel for maneuvering into harbor when she arrives. I know this all sounds Doomsday-ish, but if the same person who spends thousands on liferafts, safety flares, man-overboard lights, and radar reflectors forgets to teach his crew to sail well, he is neglecting his biggest safety asset.

I also know some skippers will be thinking: *If I became ill 600 miles from land, my partner would use the EPIRB and call for assistance.* But think twice about this option. Remember, once you ask for outside assistance, you will have to face abandoning your boat unless your wife or partner is comfortable bringing it into port.

How do you go about not only teaching your partner to sail, but making it interesting? The first thing I would suggest is taking a careful look at your own sailing ability. If you have not had lots of experience, your partner will know. She won't be relaxed if it is a case of the blind leading the blind. If you are inexperienced, you are bound to make mistakes such as leaving your gennaker up too long and having to fight a wildly flogging mess on a

heaving foredeck while yelling something such as, “Keep her up in the wind, dammit!” It would be far better to invest in a sailing course; a combination charter cruise/learn-to-cruise holiday in the Caribbean, or a buy or borrow a dinghy or small (under 20 feet long) sailboat and join in your local sailing club’s beginners’ course.

If you already know how to sail, I still recommend buying a small sailing boat for your wife or partner to learn in. Make it one that is easy for a one person to handle. Then she can go off by herself and make mistakes without you rushing to assist. That’s how I learned to sail. Larry bought me a 7-foot pram that would eventually make a perfect tender to *Seraffyn*, which was under construction. We had a launching party and I proudly set off in newly christened *Rabicon* (used a bottle of beer rather than spend the money on Champagne) and knocked myself soundly on the head with her 7-foot-long boom. I quickly learned to control my gybes after that. Dinghies react quickly and *teach* quickly, so after several wonderful sails on board *Rabicon* I was a much more useful hand on board a cruiser. Eventually, when *Seraffyn* was launched, Larry helped me expand my sailing education from the firm base I’d gained in the dinghy. And through the years he encouraged me to go sailing on other people’s boats and to invite other women to come sailing with me while he stayed behind. Eventually I became brave enough (determined enough) to take the boat out sailing completely on my own—a wonderful experience that cemented my love of sailing.

Today there are far more women involved in sailing than there were when I first teamed up with Larry. And some of these women have created courses aimed towards helping other women feel comfortable with all aspects of sailing and cruising. Type “woman’s sailing courses” into your search engine and you’ll get several dozen results such as ladyshipsailing.com, offshoresailing.com/women-only-sailing-programs/ or girlsgosailing.com. Each of these courses include sections on how to get your boat back into port if your mate is disabled in some way.² Think about giving your partner a gift that will benefit both of you—a week in a warm sunny place like the Caribbean or the Med, for example, where she can get

out sailing with other enthusiastic women and get a break from the cold blast of winter.

Once your partner knows the basics of sailing, start trading positions with her. Don't always take the helm in interesting situations; let her do it. You offer to winch in the sheets as she tacks up the river. Let her choose the spot to anchor in and let the ground tackle go. Look around your sailing home and think of the most interesting jobs. Let your partner do them for a change. She'll like you and your boat better if she isn't always assigned to scrubbing the bottom.

Finally, as you teach your wife or partner to sail your boat, look at your gear. Is your sheet winch too small to give the smallest member of the sailing crew the power she needs? Would a simpler reefing system allow her to shorten sail without waking you? Would a jib downhaul help? Simplify your gear to meet your partner's needs, and sailing will be more fun for both of you.

To learn to sail well, I had to acquire the skill of telling Larry not to nag me when I was trying something new. In fact one day I banished him to the headstay at the end of the bowsprit while I did all the work of short-tacking up Newport Bay on board *Seraffyn*, winching in the sheets, letting them go when I came about. I couldn't hear his comments, and I soon set my own pattern for tacking and getting the jib in quickly. I was able to concentrate solely on what I was doing without having half an ear for the next bit of what I perceived as "criticism"—even if Larry thought of his responses as "constructive comments." My final reward came when Larry was gone for six weeks to race around Britain with an English sailor and I sailed *Seraffyn* singlehanded along the south coast of England, stopping at small ports along the way and even making what turned out to be an overnight passage of 40 miles from Plymouth to Falmouth. I don't know which of us was prouder. Larry heard of my little voyage and told a friend, "I knew Lin could do it, but now I don't have to worry about either of us because Lin knows she can take care of herself if she needs to."

If I can learn to sail an engine-free cruiser, anyone can learn to sail a modern cruising boat. I'm 4 feet 10 inches, and mechanically inept. All your partner needs is what Larry gave me: patience, encouragement, and a chance to learn and practice sailing on her own.

THOUGHTS FROM ANOTHER WOMAN WHO LOVES SAILING

Michelle Elvy has been cruising with her husband Bernie and two children on board *Momo*, a Mason 43 cutter-rigged sloop, for more than 15 years. She is a writer and a freelance editor. As she was editing the manuscript for this new edition, Michelle emphasized the importance of this chapter, of the need for women to take part in the adventure, and to learn independently yet in accord with their partner. One of her notes suggested I add more information for couples who both have previous sailing experience. She then used some illustrations from her sailing life, which I felt were very useful. In our case, Larry was a highly experienced sailor when we first met, and I was a complete novice. However, from the moment we decided to voyage together he encouraged me to share the responsibilities on board. Thus we were both in complete accord with Michelle's notes about roles on board, which I share here:

Both Bernie and I had already sailed some when we met—and we both knew enough to get around. I'd sailed on friends' boats and raced in Newport, and I had owned a little Sea Sprite with two friends in Boston. Bernie had done some lake sailing and loved Lasers. But when we bought our first boat, the very first thing we did—even before sailing little Simplicissimus around the Chesapeake—was sign up for a course. We did basic training for one week together, sailing small Colgates and reading all the theory (from the beginning). Egos went out the window; we knew we had to get on even ground before setting sail together.

Then we added onto that a week of charter sailing with a captain—to learn some more offshore navigation and mostly to learn how to sail, anchor, maneuver around reefs, etc. with each other—as a team. It is the best thing we did to set ourselves on the right path. I attribute our longevity to the fact that we set ourselves mutual expectations and learned all the basics together (even if we already knew them: the together was essential).

Hand-in-hand with the above goes back to your point about starting out on a small boat: We began with our Triton and moved to the Mason 43. By the time we'd sailed five years on the Triton, we both could singlehand, repair, change sails, reef, work the home-made windvane, etc. — all necessary for a harmonious sailing life. And because we started small, we gained critical confidence—in the boat, in ourselves, and in each other.

Another story from our own domestic experience: We don't use the names of Captain, Admiral, etc.; we prefer a more (for lack of a better word) democratic approach. We eschew all traditional titles of privilege. However, we are historians and we know why they are there—and, more importantly, we recognize that reality dictates quick decisions and prioritization. So our refusing to call one or the other Captain or First Mate or even Admiral doesn't mean that every decision requires a vote, and it certainly doesn't mean we can't act fast when an emergency presents itself. In our case, I think we've been sailing together long enough to know instinctually when one is right, when one ought to back down, when to err on the side of caution (which is always). Many couples need those

roles. I consider us quite lucky that we do not. Bernie would never encroach upon my own person in terms of power or positioning of authority. But nor would I him: there is a rare balance achieved by mutual respect. And it all goes back, again, to how we started out: we are conscious of that precious balance, and we maintain it, even in how we address each other or even think of each other in the space we occupy together.

1 There are women who already enjoy sailing but are still reluctant to set off cruising. You might find some helpful ideas by reading, for example, “Sixteen Ways to Keep Your Lover” in *The Capable Cruiser*, third edition.

2 An additional source of encouragement and information for women who are getting started in sailing and cruising, with a partner or on their own, is Women Who Sail, the Facebook group originally started by Charlotte Kaufman which has now spread into over a dozen countries. I have logged into Women Who Sail Australia, Women Who Sail New Zealand, as well as the original Women Who Sail.

9

The Mate You Scare Could Be Your Own



Sam rushed on deck to meet us as we rowed across the still starlit patch of water between our two boats. “Hey, good to see you two. When’d you get back? How was your delivery job? Climb on board and meet my wife. She’s decided to join me on this cruise.”

We secured our dinghy and went into the glowing oil-lit cabin on *Delsamb*. Sam poured us a drink as he introduced his tanned, twinkling-eyed wife. “This is Beatty. She hasn’t done much cruising yet, but she’s giving it a try. I’m breaking her in the easy way. Short day hops till she knows the boat. Now sit down and tell me about your transatlantic sail. Get into any storms?”

“Not till we were just 35 miles from New Orleans,” Larry began. “We were powering happily along over a flat sea, getting the boat ready to hand over to its owner, crew cleaning her up. About midnight the wind came up, dead on our nose.” I listened as Larry told the story exactly as it happened. I recalled how, by 0200 we were hove to in 50 knots. The temperature dropped from 60 degrees to 18 degrees Fahrenheit. It grew so cold we had to change watch every hour. We were hove-to for two-and-a-half days. The

second morning I got a weather forecast: waterspouts for our area. Sure enough, at least six of them formed up over the smoking sea. We had kept the engine ready to throw into gear so we could take avoiding action if we had to. Larry continued his story, “Frightening thing; never been around waterspouts before. Only way we could keep the man on watch from freezing was to use everyone’s warm clothes plus wet gear and socks on his hands. It was hard to believe that just two days before we’d been sunbathing, planning on what we’d do when we got in. Boat rode well though, hove-to.”

I noticed Beatty shaking her head and I thought, *Here we go again, telling ‘sea-fearing’ stories.* Why is it no one ever tells about the good times?

The wonderful days far outnumber the difficult ones—perhaps that’s why it’s hard to remember and describe them. And the drama of close calls makes for good stories—such is human nature. But during that same delivery job, we had many fine days. Take the day when a tropical sun warmed us thoroughly and our American crewman Richard, who’d hitched a ride back from a walking tour of Europe and the Middle East, grabbed his huge duffle bag and pulled out a hammock. He strung the hammock from the forward shrouds and as the *Vagrant Gypsy* surged over the seas, beam-reaching at 9 knots, we took turns swinging in the sunshine. Our English crewman, Chris, made his first attempt at making yeast bread after three weeks of watching me in the galley. So at tea time we all tasted a very successful loaf, smothered in butter and jam. Richard strummed his guitar and we discordantly tried to sing Beatles favorites: *Here comes the sun, it feels like years since it’s been here....*

It’s not only men who are guilty of telling sea-fearing stories. I love cruising and sailing more than heavy weather, yet as soon as the reunion kissing and hellos were over after a two-year separation from my parents, I caught myself telling two people who enjoy sailing but have done no offshore cruising, “We stayed too late in the Baltic. Everyone warned us, ‘Leave by September 15 or take your boat out of the water.’ But we were having too much fun.” Such was my introduction to the nine-day gale we

waited out—a wait that took us into mid- October. When we finally did leave, the following wind increased as dark fell till it was blowing Force 10. “ We dropped all sail but had to keep running—couldn’t heave-to ‘cause dozens of fishing boats were trying to work back toward the island, and we had to have way on to maneuver around them,” I said. “*Seraffyn* was running beautifully under bare poles when all of a sudden one wave broke right on top of us. Covered the boat completely. Mast must have been at least 30 degrees below the horizon. Companionway was partially open, water poured in. Every oil lamp lens burst and as soon as we righted I crawled out of my bunk and stepped into water ten inches deep.” I looked around the room and ended my story: “Boy did I start pumping!”

My mother asked me, “And you enjoy this?”

I realized my mistake at once. Why hadn’t I told them about sailing for three months under the wonderful midnight sun, through the maze of 20,000 Swedish islands and 30,000 Finnish ones, about safe anchorages less than 2 miles apart? I should have talked about the time we were whispering along on a following breeze, wearing just shorts and jerseys, with bare feet. Tree-covered islands crowded down on the narrow channel, and the navigation marks on our excellent charts corresponded perfectly. We glanced behind to see a Finnish 8-meter yacht running up the channel, slowly gaining on us. We rushed for our cameras; they ran for theirs. At the narrowest part of the channel they caught us. We joined their laughter and shouted greetings as the skippers on each yacht pulled in their winged-out mainsails so we could sail closer together and miss brushing the trees on either side. For six of eight lovely minutes we traded sailing gossip. I noted the special anchorages they told us about as Larry kept *Seraffyn* gliding along on course, less than 20 feet from the beautifully varnished racing machine. Then they slowly pulled ahead in the 8-knot breeze and we settled back on our sunlit deck, happy to be alive.

All during the four decades Larry and I voyaged together, and now that I am once again voyaging, this time with David on his sloop *Sahula*, I am constantly meeting new sailors. Often they are on the verge of making that big decision: they want to go cruising. So they come on board to gather all

the information they can, just as Larry and I did when we were building and preparing *Seraffyn*, our first cruising boat. Or, three or four cruising boats arrive in the same port and everyone gets together in the largest cockpit to trade news. And so the frightening tales begin.

Yet stormy winds are the exception for most sailors. When I was preparing the fourth edition of *Storm Tactics Handbook*, I went through the logs of all our voyaging on both *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin* and found that in 47 years and almost 170,000 miles of cruising we spent less than 75 days in winds of Force 8 or above. This was in spite of the fact that our voyages took us south of the great southern capes and to the higher latitudes north of Scotland and twice into the Baltic. Most of the time we had wonderful sailing spiced by hard beats and slow drifts. On the two dozen deliveries I have been on, we racked up about 30,000 additional miles and did have a larger portion of gale force winds—that was because we couldn't choose our weather quite as carefully. Even then, the total number of days was still small—less than a dozen. If you figure that out, that is about 5 percent of all the sailing we did, a figure that is probably double for those who sail mostly in the middle latitudes. This is confirmed by looking back at the 9,000 miles I have sailed over the past year on board *Sahula*. Though we sailed around the southern tip of New Zealand then across the notoriously fickle Tasman Sea, through Fiji and Vanuatu and on to Australia then south right to the tip of Tasmania, we spent less than ten hours in gale force winds. I have discussed this with other long-term cruising people and they confirm it. With proper planning, there is little reason to spend much time in storms. Yet a new sailor comes on board and we all drag out the sea stories, rarely considering their effect.

I know happy days don't make nearly as dramatic an impression, but aren't they worth telling about? Think of the day you worked slowly into a deserted anchorage just at sunset, then rowed ashore to start a small bonfire so you could grill the fish you caught only hours before. And that afternoon lazing on the foredeck as the boat reaches steadily along while you watched porpoises weave their magic around your bow. Then there's that perfect passage, a beam-reach of 20 or 200 miles when you never had to change

sails or steer by hand, when your dinners were a gourmet's delight to an appetite whetted by a 12-knot breeze over a sea specked with smiling whitehorses.

Next time you're in a crowd of sailors and would-be voyagers and catch yourself starting to tell a sea-fearing story, look around. Could your story be the one that makes a sailor chary of his dream? Would some sailor's mate, just ready to go along on this great adventure, stop and reconsider after your tale of flying spray and soaked bunks? All sailors need to be cautious, and even prepare for uncomfortable days at sea. But let's recall the good days, too. How about telling of the wondrous days when the winds blew fair, those days that keep us coming back for more.

I know it's hard, but I'm trying to do it, even if I'm dying to tell you about the time I was on watch alone, running out of Isla del Cocos, in 25 knots of wind, when I noticed a ferocious squally cloud racing up behind, rain hissing at its foaming base. Stay long enough, and you might hear that story, but I'll recall the glorious rainbow that followed that squall, too.

10

The People You Meet



Many years ago, when Larry and I were just getting used to the thrill of cruising, when we were unwinding and learning to live without a clock, with our lives directed by the winds and currents, we sailed into La Paz and anchored next to a little American trimaran registered in Las Vegas, Nevada. The couple on the trimaran rowed over and asked us if we'd been in La Paz before. When we said we hadn't, they offered to share their knowledge with us. They'd been in La Paz for two weeks.

We invited them on board and mixed up a rum punch. The four of us spent the rest of the afternoon sheltered from the sun under our awning. As Annabelle and Gordon Yates prepared to go home, we thanked them for their helpful advice and made plans to try a new restaurant with them the next day. While he was climbing into his dinghy, Gordon commented, "Cruising is great, and the bonus of cruising is the people we meet."

At the time, Gordon's comment didn't register with us. We were too busy trying to deplete the Gulf of California's supply of lobster with our trusty trident. We spent two or three weeks at a time hidden in deserted coves, sunbathing, swimming, puttering on the boat, and skin-diving. Every

third week or so, we'd sail back to La Paz for fresh supplies and a dinner out.

Then, after about four months of cruising, his words began to make sense. We started looking around us and noticed people. Not only the other cruising people, but the people of the towns and villages, the fishermen and merchant seamen. We worked at meeting them and found that our cruising life began growing added dimensions.

We learned that the easiest people to meet are other cruising people. You all have something in common. The ice can be broken by just calling to another yacht, "How is the holding ground?" before you drop your anchor. Most market towns in popular cruising areas turn into week-long parties when ten or twelve cruising yachts arrive at the same time. Often you'll see one or another yacht come to look like a mother duck with five or six dinghies trailing astern.

Cruising friends are a great source of information, and even though you sail on in different directions, you often stay in touch. Larry and I crossed paths with Annabelle and Gordon in four different countries. We also kept getting word of them from other cruisers because the cruising village is rather small in population. After you've been cruising for two or three years, each new cruising friend seems to know someone you met in the port before last.

In Europe and in places like Papeete in the Pacific we found that most cruising sailors seem to prefer tying their yacht to a seawall or quay instead of anchoring. Then the next yacht ties alongside and so on. We've sometimes seen boats seven or eight abreast. This is a fine way to meet people, but is really only good if you leave after one or two days. The strain of having no privacy at all and listening to people constantly walk across your decks would be hard on old friends, let alone people you met only that day.

Because other cruising yachtsmen are so easy to meet and generally very interesting, we, like so many other people, have to remind ourselves why we went cruising in the first place—if we'd only wanted to meet sailors, we could have done that in our own local cruising area.

It is the people you meet on shore who could add the most interest to your voyaging life. They are the key to learning more about how people in other parts of the world live. Your boat is a floating home that puts you in a front row seat. It's your calling card and since you went to the trouble of sailing instead of taking an airplane, local people are going to be a bit more interested in meeting you.

Among the first people Larry and I tried approaching when we first set off cruising were the local fisherman. Armed with my Spanish-American dictionary, a bucket, and a 100-peso note, Larry and I rowed over to a Mexican shrimp trawler that anchored near us in Salina Cruz. The fisherman watched us coming and grabbed our dinghy painter and tied it. They motioned us on board immediately. I tried asking the price of some shrimp in Spanish. The captain knew some English, I had a limited but slowly growing knowledge of Spanish, and we ended up sharing a beer and being shown around the trawler from engine room to galley. When we asked how all of the complicated-looking trawling gear worked to catch shrimp, the captain tried drawing pictures on his deck with a penknife, then threw his hands up in disgust. "Enough!" he said, "You come fishing with us tonight."

He radioed to a trawler anchored near *Seraffyn* and made arrangements to have the fishermen watch her. Then his crewmen lifted our dinghy onto the trawler's cabin-top, and we were off for a night's trawling. What an education! We returned the next morning laden with a bucket of still bouncing shrimp, another of shiny seashells, stomachs full of turtle stew, and heads full of new impressions.

Our experiences everywhere have been the same. Fishermen want to be friendly. Their advice can be invaluable. In fact, I'd trust a fisherman's advice about the sea more than I would a local yachtsman. I recall a Tasmanian fisherman telling me how he preferred working inshore when there was a good swell running. "Since the sea will break when it runs across anything that is less than eight times the wave height, I can tell exactly where any dangers lie," he'd said. It is a lesson we put to good use. We often start a conversation with these working seamen just by asking for

a weather forecast and end up getting tips on good harbors and local signs of bad weather.

Language can be a difficulty, but even in Finland, where we had absolutely no knowledge of the language, we found the fishermen willing to try sign language to communicate, or to patiently wait while we thumbed through a translation dictionary. Recently I have used translation apps or websites to help us along with sites such as translate.google.com, which lets you type in an English sentence then choose from up to 100 languages. Other sites use voice recognition for translation. Accuracy drops for complicated communications. Even with limited knowledge of the local language, we found, once we began a conversation with someone new, the odd-ball translations were usually a source of amusement that helped cement a friendship.

Besides the local fishing fleets, another source of knowledge (as well as interesting people) are merchant ships. Especially in smaller harbors where there are only one or two freighters anchored or moored alongside a quay, merchant seamen are easy to approach. They seem to really enjoy the diversion of unexpected company. We've found that almost all merchant shipping officers speak English.

And how do you approach them? Larry and I often got into our little dinghy and rowed out to where they are moored. We approached their boarding ladder and simply asked the first person we saw, "Do you give tours of your ship?" Our query was never refused, and going from one end to the other of a large tanker—down five flights of stairs to see the engines, and up another seven to the bridge—can be extremely interesting and informative. Times have changed, of course. Today there are far fewer tramp steamers stopping in out-of-the-way ports, and security on larger ships makes inviting guests on board far more difficult. But as I voyaged on board *Sahula* to Vanuatu in 2019, I encountered several chances to interact with the crew on smaller commercial vessels using the same techniques I learned during my earlier voyages.

Once again, I realized, we cruisers have the advantage since we have our home with us. We can easily reciprocate for any hospitality by offering a

dinner on board, or an afternoon's sail. In Mexico, we took the chief officer of a Stateline ship skin-diving. He caught a bucket of crabs which he gave to the Chinese ship's cook. The cook made us a great dinner in exchange.

The hospitality we have been shown by yacht clubs worldwide has been overwhelming. Members offer us assistance, the use of their homes, and entertainment. In fact, it is only the hospitality of yacht clubs that induces us to visit some big harbors. The lure of long hot showers and people interested in sailing (and in the case of Larry and me, racing) helps us overcome our dislike of crowds and busy cities.

To reciprocate for the friendship yacht club members show us, we carry a large supply of burgees from our own club. We present one to the secretary or commodore of the club we're visiting on the day we leave. It's a small thing, but it always seems to be right.

Introductions from friends really help in foreign countries. We keep every address we are offered. When Larry and I used to arrive near one of the places where we had an introduction, we'd send along a postcard saying "We are cruising in a small yacht from Canada. So-and-so said we would enjoy meeting you. Please join us for a drink on board *Taleisin* at cocktail time tomorrow or the next day. Contact us at" Now, I'd send an email, preferably including a copy of the note from whoever suggested we meet up with this potential new friend.

This way, people are given a choice. If they are too busy, or if our timing is inconvenient, they aren't obliged to answer. We've met some great people this way. On the average nine out of ten people answer such notes by appearing almost immediately. And, since these are the people who are living and working in the country, these are the people who can really teach us a lot.

One item which definitely proved invaluable as an icebreaker for new visitors, especially those who don't speak English or Spanish, was small photo album which I kept within easy reach. In it was a selection of photos showing our families and their homes, along with some of us building our boat, and a few showing us exploring interesting destinations.



Our small photo album delighted 17-year-old Molokeini when she rowed out with some of her friends to greet us in Nuiatoputapu, Northern Tonga. Now, more than 30 years later, she lives in New Zealand and is one of my closest friends.

It worked as a conversation starter each time we pulled this out, since it made us seem more accessible. Even youngsters loved looking through it, and would spend a long time pointing at one face or another and asking if this was a brother, sister, parent. Even in today's electronic photo world, I

continue to carry a small album of printed photos as I travel because I find people find leafing through the pages far more intimate than looking at a cellphone or computer.

We've been frequently invited out to meals and given tours—it seems to be a part of this traveling lifestyle—so as a way of repaying the hospitality, we have made a habit of collecting small items from each place we visit that may become a gift somewhere down the way. A necklace made of passion fruit seeds in Colombia costs us very little, but made a lovely house gift for a host in Bermuda. A bottle of wine presented in an intricately woven basket from Zimbabwe was more memorable than simple a plain bottle of wine when we were entertained in Brazil. I have always tried to keep a stock of items such as handcrafted pottery, wooden carvings, unique seashells, or small paintings. I've never been sorry to have them.

In England, I found a new way to get to know some local people. Larry and I had secured the boat alongside the quay that faces the main street in Poole. All day long, people strolled by stopping to stare and dream. Often they would work up the nerve to ask us questions about our voyage. “Where did you come from? How long did it take? Where are you going?”

I decided to turn the tables on the next person who asked us a question. After answering his first question, I countered, “Where are you from?” He looked very surprised and said, “Originally from London, but I live here now.” Soon I invited him on board while I continued asking him about the area, and an hour later, after having a drink on board *Taleisin*, Larry and I were in Lee's car while he and his wife showed us their favorite spots in Dorset.

Cruising keeps confirming our opinion that people everywhere are the same—warm and welcoming! Even if sometimes a bit shy. Meeting new people in every port makes it all fun. We learned a bit of Spanish and even the little we knew helped us make more friends in a dozen different countries. In each place we went, we tried to practice some basic greetings and to have a translation dictionary ready at hand to help with conversations. In reality, English and a smile combine to make an international language around people who like yachts.

Some singlehandlers tell me they have a harder time meeting local people than their friends who sail as a couple. But two I met had tips to share with other singlehandlers. “Get off your boat and go to church,” one told me. “Even if you aren’t normally a churchgoer, choose a relatively small congregation and I’ll guarantee you’ll meet folks who make you welcome.” Another suggested joining local dance classes if you are going to be in port for more than a few weeks. The key to meeting local people is to give them a chance to see that you are interested in them and their lives.

As a visitor in a small boat, you have a wonderful advantage. You come into a new place looking for adventures. You are interesting because you are foreign. You stay long enough to learn the good things about people and then hoist your sails and leave before you learn their bad habits or they learn yours.

It’s a bit like seeing life through rose-colored glasses. But then that’s why we all want to cruise. We’re dreamers, escaping the old and looking for a shiny new world. In more than forty years of cruising, I’ve come to realize that this bright, promising world exists, and the people we meet make that world even better.



We had a major language barrier when we met these Polish folk dancers at a festival in Finland. But with the help of a dictionary and lots of laughter we became friends and were invited to join them in southern Poland two months later. We did, and it was amazing.



We stayed in Mar del Plata for only six weeks, but the local sailors invited us into their lives. I still keep touch with some of them, 16 years later.



After 10 months in Knysna, South Africa, our farewell party was a time for laughter and tears.



SECTION IV

The Nuts and Bolts of Cruising - Simplicity Works

“How has cruising changed a lot since you two set off so many years ago?” Every blogger or writer who interviews me asks the same question and expresses the same surprise when I answer, it is far harder to get off cruising today than it was 30 or 40 years ago. The reason? It is far harder to resist adding all of the interesting gear that is now available “off the shelf.” And few people have the all the skills required to fix all that modern gear. Things that look like wonderfully innovative aids to sailing and cruising can be like a lead weight around your neck when they break down far from the nearest repairman. Can you sail onward without that system working? Do you send for a new unit? Do you give up two months of cruising or risk a voyage during hurricane season because of delays caused by gear failure?

Most the people in your home port and those you meet along the way will urge you to buy one more guaranteed-to-be-necessary, got-to-have-it item. Our motto and one echoed by many of the most successful cruisers we have met has always been, “If you can’t fix it yourself, save the money right now and the aggravation later.”

Think simplicity.

Perhaps the extreme approach to simplicity that enabled us to get off cruising as a young couple and kept us going affordably for decades is more (or less, rather) than you would enjoy living with. But the following

chapters might give you some ideas that start you on the road to technical freedom.

11

Tools and Spares for Offshore Voyagers



A straightforward, simple sailboat can be maintained and repaired with relatively few tools. As you add machinery and electronics to your boat, the list of necessary spare parts and tools increases. More important, the list of personal skills you need grows proportionately if you wish to maintain your vessel in a self-sufficient manner.

Each of the four lists below are divided into categories that include the minimum tools every sailor should carry, then additional tools for boats with more complications such as inboard engines and electrical equipment. The final part of each list includes the extra tools that will be handy if you want to turn professional to earn a few dollars as you cruise.

Note: The tools listed here are from our own notes and contain Imperial measurements and calculations; metric equivalents are of course readily available to vessels from Europe and elsewhere.

Sailmaking tools for the basic sailboat:

Sail needles, assorted, from no. 12 to no. 19 Knife
Side cutters (diagonal wire cutters)
Rope fid
Sailor's palm
Scissors
Awl
Thread
Waxed Dacron seizing thread
Nylon webbing
¼" (6mm) Dacron line
Spare Dacron cloth
Beeswax
¾" grommet punch, spare grommets, and dies
Contact cement for emergency repairs
Butane pipe lighter to seal line ends
(I like carrying a small bernzomatic blowtorch.
www.bernzomatic.com/Products/Hand-Torches/Instant-On-Off/ST2200T)

Additional sailmaking tools needed to earn a living:

Electric portable zig-zag sewing machine with hand-cranking attachment Dies for brass cringle liners, plus assorted liners and rings
Soft hammer
Seam ripper
Soldering gun with flat tip for hot-knifing Dacron cloth
Rigging vise and fids (priggers), Nicopress tools (talerit)
Various weights of spare cloth and boltrope materials
100-foot measuring tape
Nylon webbing
White electrical tape

Carpentry tools for a basic sailboat, be it timber, glass, or steel:

- 1/4-, 1/2-, and 1" wood chisels
- Smoothing plane
- Backsaw, hacksaw
- Claw hammer
- Chisel for timber, second for rough work on glass or metal
- Counterbores for wood screws
- Brace and bits 1/4" to 1" and expandable bit to 1 1/2"
- Four or five adjustable clamps
- Two-speed hand drill plus twist drills to fit
- Tape measure—metric and imperial
- Paint and varnish brushes
- Sharpening stone
- Oil can
- Putty knife
- Wood scraper and fine file
- Wood rasp

Additional carpenter's tools for owners of wooden yachts:

- Caulking tools including making iron, nib iron, reefing irons (bent files)
- Caulking mallet
- Wood plug cutters of 3/8, 1/2 and 5/8" to fit your counter bores
- Screw driver bits for brace
- 3/8" drill motor



This 110-220 step-down, step-up converter (transformer) takes up very little space, costs less than US\$25, and weighs about eight pounds. It's a handy unit which allows you to use American-built electrical hand tools everywhere in the world. (In Europe, the Far East, and South America, 220 is the normal voltage available.) I prefer using 110 tools around boats and near the water because it is safer than 220. We know of two cruising sailors who were electrocuted and died when they were using 220-volt hand tools from the dinghy or off a dock. Be careful when you are using power tools near the water.

Additional tools for professionals:

Assortment of caulking irons

Reefing tools

Caulking gun for paying seams with cartridges

1/4-, 3/8-, 3/4-, 1 1/4- and 1 1/2" wood chisels or small slicks

Rabbet plane, jack plane, block plane, bullnose plane

Coping saw, dovetail saw (small back saw)

Long drills 18" to 36" lengths, 3/16" to 1/2" diameter

Electric drill motor with 1/2-inch chuck, variable speed for driving screws
3"-wide belt sander

8" by 12" square

Bevel gauge, marking gauge
50-foot tape measure
Angle grinder for repairs on fiberglass yachts
Wood rasp (fine)
Scribe (compass)
Spoke shave
Various wood scrapers
Step up/step down converter (transformer) for 220 volt to 110 volt so tools can be used in other countries

When we were working in countries with 220/240-volt electrical power and using 220/240-volt tools, we also carried a throw-out switch transformer to protect ourselves while working near the water. These transformers, which shut the electricity off immediately if there is an overload or grounding, cost about US\$50 for sizes sufficient to handle drills and sanders. They are about the size of a 2.2 pound (1 kilo) package of sugar and probably could have saved the lives of the two sailors we describe in the caption opposite.

Mechanic's tools for the basic sailboat (no engine):

8" and 10" crescent wrenches
Assorted screwdrivers
Vise grips
Pliers
Cold chisel
Fine flat file, course half round bastard, various round files H.S. drill index, $\frac{1}{16}$ " to $\frac{3}{8}$ " inches
Hacksaw
Small pipe wrench
Ball peen hammer

Additional tools if you own an outboard motor:

$\frac{3}{8}$ " drive socket set
 $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ " combination wrenches

With an inboard engine, add:

$\frac{1}{2}$ " drive socket set, up to $1\frac{1}{4}$ "
Feeler gauge
Combination wrenches up to 1"
Allen (hex) wrenches
Water pump pliers
Phillips head screwdrivers
Cheap set of taps and dies
Machinist square and straight edge
Inside-outside calipers
Needlenose pliers
8" and 14" pipe wrenches
12" and 16" crescent wrenches
Small and large assorted metal files and cold chisels
Valve grinding compound
Set of easy outs
Countersinks
Center punches
Side cutters
Pin punches
Selection of brass rod for soft punches $\frac{1}{4}$ " - to $\frac{3}{4}$ " $\times$ 6"
Wire brush
Pry bar
Tin snips

For the professional mechanic, add:

Micrometers
Various gear pullers
Shop manuals for popular marine diesel engines
Torque wrench
Large set of Allen wrenches
Quality set of tap and dies

Electrical tools for the basic sailboat (110 engine or wet battery):

Small test light and alligator clips to test dry cells
Electrical tape

Add for yacht with batteries and electronics:

Voltmeter
Soldering gun
Wire stripper
Selection of connectors and wire

During our years of voyaging on board *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin* we carried every item on the above lists except for the belt sander, sewing machine, angle grinder, $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch socket set, and items listed under professional mechanic's and professional electrical tools. All of these tools took up about four cubic feet of space and weighed approximately 140 pounds.

THE CARE AND STORAGE OF TOOLS

Iron tools are a hassle on board. WD40 and plastic toolboxes make protecting them much easier. After you are finished with each job, heave all your tools in the toolbox, mist thoroughly with spray WD40 and shut the lid. This mist will oil and protect all the nooks and crannies in your tools, even the grooves in taps, drills, and dies. It will also protect the items you

rarely use, the ones that are sitting on the bottom of the box. (When I couldn't buy WD40, I substituted CRC and found it worked just as well for this job. What you need is a water-displacing spray oil.)

For larger tools, such as my handsaw, I have loose plastic sheaths which protect the teeth. I spray the teeth with WD40 and store the saw tooth-up so water can't get trapped in the sheath. All my chisels have their own leather or plastic sheaths which I keep packed with Lubriplate grease. When I finish with the chisels, the greased sheath automatically protects the cutting edge.

Electric drills and sanders keep well if they are sprayed lightly with WD40, then wrapped in cotton rags and stored in tightly sealed plastic bags or suitable plastic boxes. Steel hand planes are best protected with a layer of grease on the flat cutting edge of the blade under the chipper, then sprayed with WD40.

The plastic toolboxes we used were about the size of a large fish tackle box. We selected high-quality ones, looking for tags which stated—strong enough to stand on. Make sure you choose ones which are rainproof with well rounded edges which won't dent woodwork, scratch teak decks, or leave rust marks. On *Taleisin* I had room for six of these boxes and used one for each category of tools we carried, sailmaking tools, caulking and putty, woodworking tools, etc.



I used a heavier oil on the blade of chisels and saws, then protected them with a leather or plastic sheath.

SPARE PARTS

Fiberglass cloth, resin, mild steel, wood, and galvanized fastenings are usually available worldwide. It's the more exotic yacht effects like stainless steel or silicon bronze bolts, rod, nuts, and washers that are relatively common in places like Europe, or the United States but become almost impossible to find in other far-flung foreign countries. Stock up on these items plus paying compounds, paints, and varnish. Pieces of metal which match the type used on your boat are handy for fabricating new parts or repairing old ones.

Sailcloth and sail-repair items are only available in the main ports of countries such as Japan, Australia, England, and France. So take a good supply with you if you are bound for exotic ports.

Invest in a shop manual for your engine or generator. These manuals contain complete rebuilding and repair information and, most important, usually have a troubleshooting section. When I delivered yachts I usually bought a shop manual for the owner if there wasn't one on board. You

should also carry the most concise repair and troubleshooting literature available for every piece of equipment on board. (Yes, you can find almost anything you need to repair the gear on your boat including YouTube videos if you have Internet access. But remember the important word here—if.)

Your tools and repair parts become more and more important the farther you sail away from your local chandler and shipyard. With good tools, personal skill, and the correct repair supplies, all things are possible.

12

Sculling or Rowing, Oar Power Works



This chapter was originally written by Larry for the first edition of Self-Sufficient Sailor because so many people were interested in learning how we moved our engine-free boat in and out of marinas and other tight spots. Larry updated it for the second edition because a significant number of other sailors sent us notes asking for more details. I think it is important to include this chapter even though it only applies to a limited number of potential voyagers. The reason? There still are wonderful voyages to be undertaken by small-boat sailors, and other potential voyagers who might be able to afford a boat under 32 feet if they keep it very simple. Even for those choosing smaller boats who wish to have an engine onboard, oar power can provide a useful backup. The number of YouTube videos listed under “yuloh” (Chinese-style sculling oars) demonstrates the continuing interest in this very old boat propulsion system.— Lin Pardey

For those seeking simplicity and self-sufficiency, it is worth considering that old standby, the oar. It will let you move your cruising boat, be it 20 feet

or 30 feet long, completely by yourself when there's no wind. It can work you into a harbor in a calm or from one anchorage to another or out a channel that's too narrow for tacking. With the proper setup and techniques, you can use the oar to work from of the lee of the land into that nearby breeze as Lin and I did when we were leaving Hilo, Hawaii, bound north for Canada. It can also move you clear of a danger that is uncomfortably close.

An appropriately sized oar can do all of these things without causing noise to disturb your cruising neighbors. It is easy to repair, cheap, and parts are available worldwide. The oar won't drip oil on your teak decks, won't pollute the ocean, requires no fossil fuel, and is as reliable as the wheel. And finally, rowing and sculling provide good body exercise. Sound like an advertisement? Yup, it's for the do-it-yourself movement or move-it-yourself movement. Choose an oar and go cruising now with the price of an engine in your pocket.

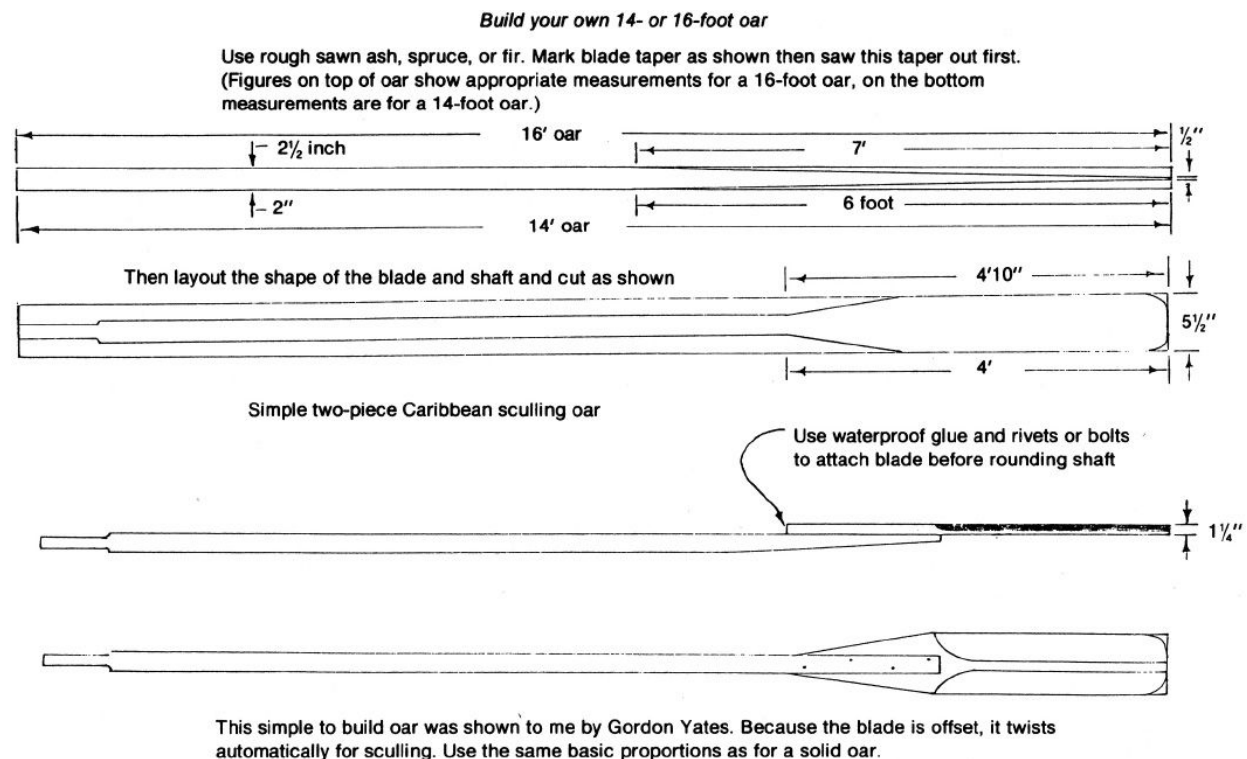


Figure 12.1

In calm weather any easily driven sailboat under 30 feet can be sculled or rowed at 1½ to 2 knots even by a 4-foot 10-inch tall person like Lin. Larger yachts have been rowed and sculled for years. Gary Hoyt used to row his engine-free Freedom 40 when he ran out of wind; the late Peer Tangvald moved his 50-footer the same way. But I would like to concentrate on yachts under 30 feet as owners of these would most benefit from the extra storage space gained and money saved by eliminating an inboard engine and its fuel tanks. This extra space could increase the 30-foot yacht's cruising range by adding space for at least a few months' worth of water and food while still leaving extra storage room for a light weather nylon drifter or another case of duty-free rum.

The yachtsperson with a smaller yacht can buy a secondhand lifeboat oar, rig up an oarlock, and find out it's easy to move around in calm weather under oar power. But since it's even easier to sail than row, the minute any breeze comes up, you'll put the oar away. The bonus is: the more you sail, the more skillful you become. Each time you use your sails or oar you are visibly aware of their flaws and can take care of the maintenance and repairs as soon as they are needed. On the other hand, the more you use your motor, the more its unseen parts wear until any one of them could fail at a critical moment.

HOW TO CHOOSE AND RIG YOUR OWN SCULLING OR ROWING OAR

The correct oar length for each boat is relative to freeboard. If you have extremely high freeboard aft, you will need a longer oar to reach the water. On *Seraffyn* the oarlock base is 3 feet 4 inches from LWL to the center of the oarlock hole. On her we used a 13 foot 9 inch long oar. On *Taleisin*, the measurement is 4 feet from load waterline to oarlock. To keep the same sculling angle we use an oar that is 15 feet 9 inches long. I think these examples are about right. The idea is to be able to stand up with the inboard end of the oar just above your waist and still have the oar at approximately

40 degrees to horizontal with about three-fourths of the blade below the water at mid-stroke.



The oar shown on this Folkboat is too short. The idea is to be able to stand up and still have the oar at approximately 40 degrees to horizontal with three-quarters of the blade below water.

Although the long oar necessary for a 30-footer may not be easy to buy off the shelf, you can sometimes find used lifeboat oars at secondhand chandleries. With the renewed interest in sports rowing it is possible to have custom built ones made in timber or carbon fiber. If you can't buy one and don't want to pay the price for custom building, see ([Figure 12.1](#)) for dimensions to build your own. It may be hard to find large oarlocks in

marine chandleries or even online. So if you can't buy an oarlock have one fabricated from stainless steel or mild steel which you have galvanized, or make a wood pattern (simply a wood oarlock) and have it cast in manganese bronze or contact Mystic River Foundry (mysticriverfoundry.com)—where you'll find the patterns I made for the rowlock we used on 29-foot 6-inch *Taleisin*. This is pattern (like all the others we made for the fittings on *Taleisin*) is available for use at no cost.

When you select your oar, make sure the shaft is straight when the blade is horizontal. Two or 3 inches of curve or sag is acceptable in the other direction on a 14- to 16-foot oar ([Figure 12.2](#)). This curvature helps twist or feather the oar automatically as you scull back and forth athwartships. In fact, Oriental yulohs, used on barges and boats as long as 45 feet are built with a definite angle in the shaft. On the other hand, a curve in the incorrect direction will make sculling difficult. That is why it is important to find a way to stow your oar so that the shaft will not sag from its own weight. Left too long in this sagging position, it will develop a permanent unwanted curve.

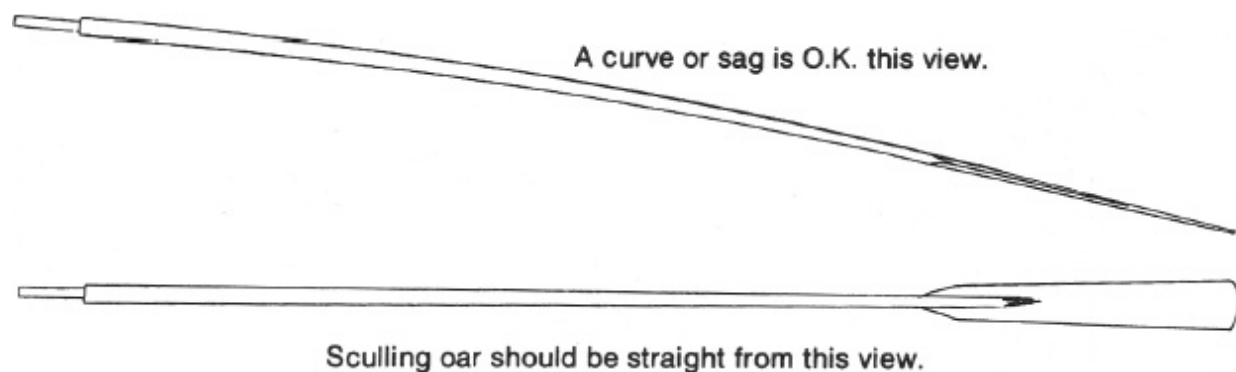


Figure 12.2

I secure the leather oar protector on our oar with contact cement and scarf or feather out the joint. I don't like to use nails or tacks because the tack holes weaken the vital stress point of the oar. Since twisting the oar is the tiring part of sculling, any way to reduce friction on the oarlock helps. I use grease or cooking oil on my leather and also have a lanyard to position the oar so the oarlock rides on the leather. This way I don't need a shoulder

on the protector. Without the traditional leather shoulder, there is less area to rub on the oarlock, therefore, less friction.

Now that you have an oarlock and oar, where do you position it for sculling or rowing? First get a scrap piece of 4 inch by 4 inch fir or hardwood and drill a hole in it at about the angle of your transom. If your boat is a double-ender, angle the hole 15 degrees. This hole should easily accommodate the stem of your oarlock. With some G clamps and plywood protectors, clamp or lash the temporary oarlock socket securely onto the taffrail, or the stern pulpit. This gives you an adjustable oarlock socket to experiment with so you can find the best spot to scull standing upright on deck. Where you place the oarlock is not too critical except that you should have the inboard end of the oar chest high while you are standing to one side of it. You also need room to move the inboard end athwartships about two feet.

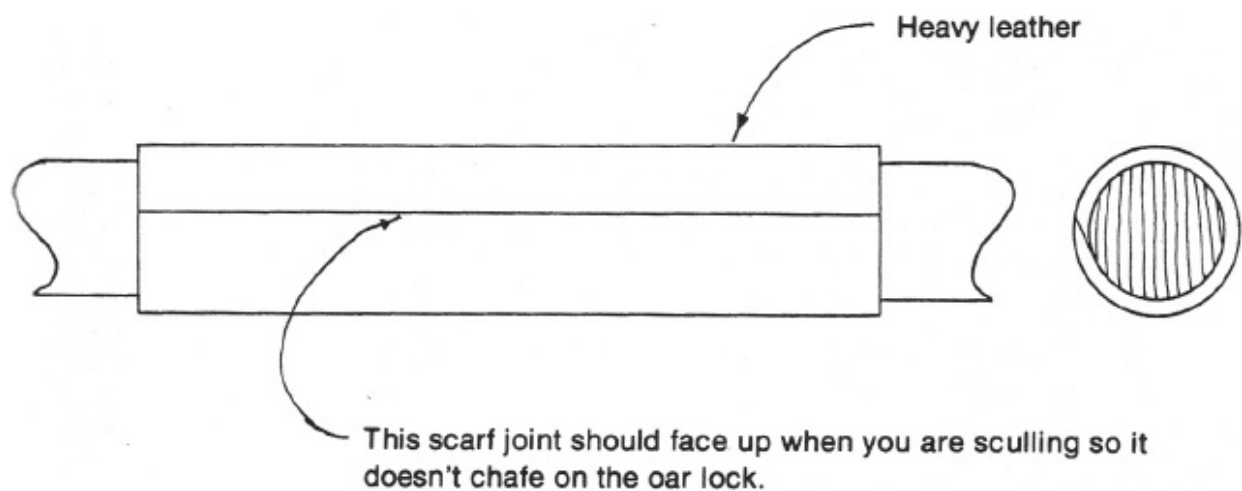


Figure 12.3

If you have an outboard motor bracket, you might be able to use it as a base for your oarlock. Or simply notch out the vertical wood part that the outboard motor clamps to and lock the oar in this.

Use your temporary oarlock socket for a while. Change positions and try it some more until you are positive you have the ideal spot. Then finally fasten down your metal socket. Ideally *Seraffyn's* socket should have been 4

inches to starboard. As it was, the sculling oar sometimes hit the rudder when I took too long a stroke. I learned my lesson and didn't secure the oarlock socket on *Taleisin* until we'd tried it out.

To find your rowing oarlock position, use the same 4 by 4 and experiment so you can row standing up, looking forward with the inboard end of the oar about chest high.

THE SECRET OF SCULLING

When we first took off on *Seraffyn*, we had a secondhand 14-foot lifeboat oar with two separate oarlock positions, one on the portside of the cockpit for single-oar rowing and one on the port side of the taffrail for sculling. For several years I rowed the boat whenever necessary, only sculling when we were in tight quarters. I rowed fisherman-style, standing in the cockpit with the tiller between my legs. This let me use the rudder to make course adjustments.

When you row with only one oar, you need quite a bit of sea-room. As you start to row, the boat tends to sheer away from the thrust of the oar until you get some speed through the water. Rowing with one oar does give you a bit more torque or power than sculling, but rowing long distances is hard and tiring since you are moving the heavy oar on the powerless back stroke.



This lanyard eliminates the need for a shoulder on the leather oar protector.



Our rowing position, with the tiller between my legs for course corrections.

But I found sculling worked far better than rowing when I was maneuvering in tight places such as between finger piers or closely moored yachts. I could literally use the scull to make the boat do a 360-degree pivot in less than two boat lengths. This is handy if you are working into a cul-de-sac dock arrangement. To turn around, you simply row or stroke in one direction. Once you are pointed in the right direction, start sculling again. These tight-quarter maneuvers are not possible with an oar sticking out ten feet on one side of your boat.

In the Gulf Islands of British Columbia, we met Ron Wall, who lived and cruised on his engineless 26-foot San Pierre dory. He showed us the secret of the Oriental lanyard system for sculling. Before this, Lin hadn't had the strength to row or scull *Seraffyn*. When I rigged Ron's lanyard connection, she immediately took over and powered our 5½-ton cutter like a

veteran sampan lady. From that day on, I switched completely to sculling and when we built *Taleisin*, she had only a sculling rowlock.

The Oriental lanyard connection is simply a 3/16-inch low-stretch Dacron line that fits through a 3/16-inch hole or eyebolt in the oar approximately halfway between the oarlock and the handle. This connection must be at right angles to the flat of the oar blade. The lower end of the line is attached to a fitting directly below the hole or eyebolt in the oar. Once you learn to keep this line tight at all times, the lanyard will take the upward load or thrust as you scull back and forth with the oar blade at about 35 degrees to the surface ([Figure 12.4](#)). The lanyard also helps twist or feather the oar in the correct direction at the end of each stroke to minimize the necessary wrist-twisting effort. You will be able to take a completely novice boatperson, scull with them for a minute, then watch as they carry on alone and move the boat at about 70 percent efficiency. Practice for a bit tied to your mooring or when you are in open water. It is dead simple with the lanyard.

The classic standing position is most comfortable for long-term sculling as it allows you to pendulum your upper body. This body swinging motion is easier and less tiring than using just your arms.

When you get your sculling oar rigged and use it for a season or two, you will come to appreciate the simplicity and extra maneuverability it gives you. Of course for safety you should have an anchor ready, dock lines and fenders available, and sails bent on even if you are in a calm anchorage. A sudden gust of wind, one that is stronger than you can row against, might blow in at any time.

Even if you have an auxiliary motor, an oar is a good cheap backup and will always work. It could also serve as a temporary rudder if your main rudder should fail.



The Oriental lanyard connection.



The classic sculling position.

But the main reason I used an oar instead of an inboard motor is that it made sailing and cruising a sport, kept me on my toes, and made sure I didn't bring the shore pressures of schedules with us. I know that people who have to get back to work on Monday morning realistically require an engine. But I would still have an oar on board in case of engine failure. It could allow you to continue on a two-week cruise instead of sitting in a harbor frustrated and waiting for engine repairs.

Many of you might be on a tight budget financially, but once you get away cruising will find that time is in abundance. Any money you save on engines or fuel could help you get away sooner and stay away longer. This is where an oar comes into its own. It can cut down overhead, bolster your feeling of sailing accomplishment, and help you identify with the engineless yachtsman of fifty or sixty years ago. Try it—it still works today. Note:

Sculling a dinghy so you can move easily between moored boats or through tight marinas is essentially the same as sculling your bigger yacht, but far easier. Because the top of your dinghy transom is closer to the water, you can use a short oar. We have sewn a protective leather band 10 inches long on one of our 7-foot, 6-inch dinghy oars, halfway between the rowlock shoulder and the oar blade, to protect the oar shaft. Our dinghy transom has a notch cut in it, about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wider than the oar shaft and as deep. The dip serves not only as a sculling lock but as a fairlead for setting out ground tackle. We find we do not need the hold-down lanyard for dinghy sculling since there is far less pressure exerted on the oar.

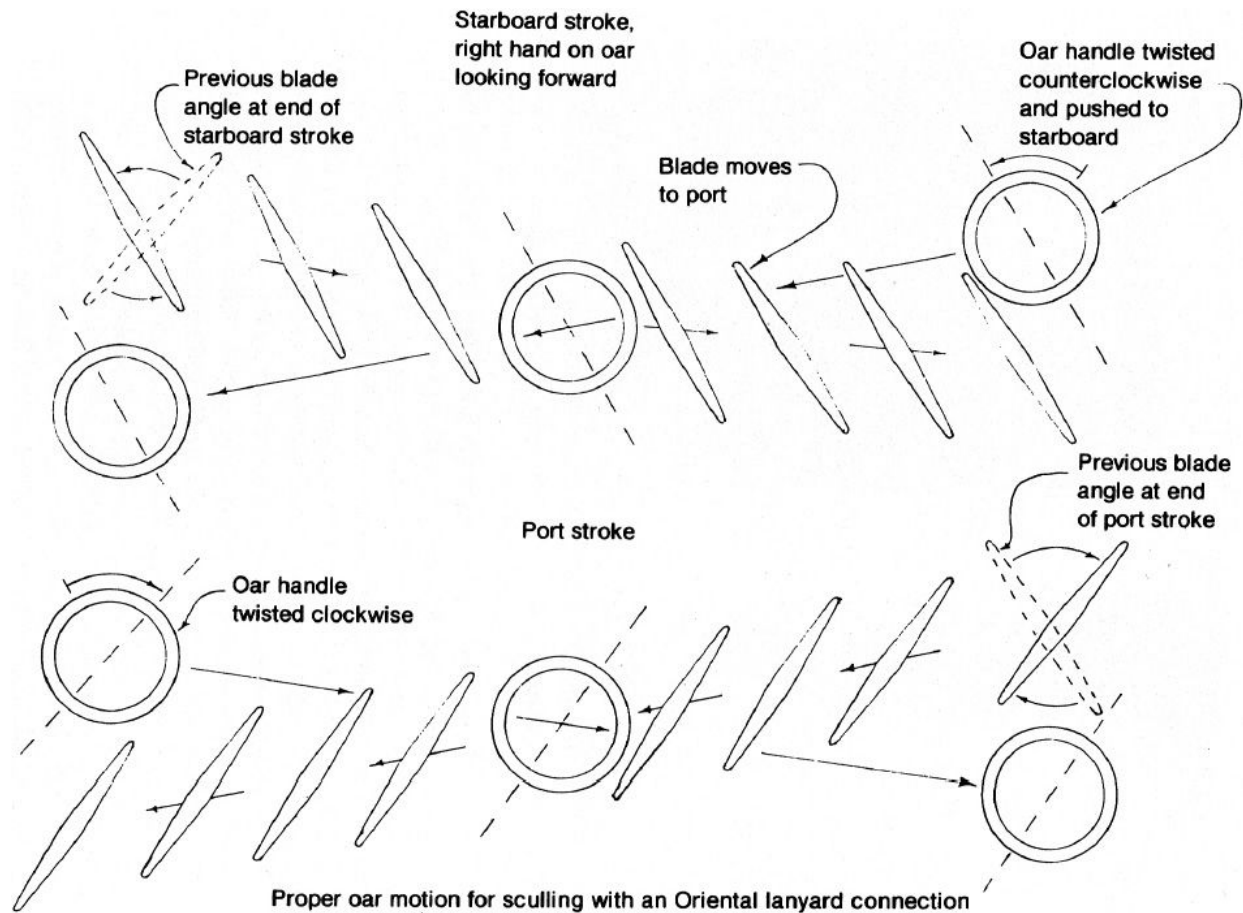


Figure 12.4



Taleisin's 15'9" sculling oar is stored along the lifeline on the port side of the bowsprit. The outboard end goes into a leather sock. There are two holes drilled into the blade that lets us securely lash the inboard end to the first lifeline stanchion.

13

Build Your Own Bulwarks



After 25,000 miles of cruising around the Pacific, and before he headed south towards Cape Horn, the well-known sailor Hal Roth decided to completely modify *Whisper*, his 35-foot fiberglass production sloop. One of the many changes he made was to fit a bulwark rail. We know why he made this change because the 8-inch-high bulwarks on *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin* have been a real advantage. Not only do they give a feeling of strength and security on a small cruising boat, but they have several other advantages.

A high bulwark gives so many things a second life. The winch handle dropped in the scuppers doesn't immediately go over. When you are setting a light-air sail such as a spinnaker or MPS, you have something to hold it in place while you get ready. Ground tackle, anchors, line, and chain can be left on deck unsecured for a short time without fear of them immediately slipping over. Things, including crew, seem to remain more attached to vessels with higher bulwarks. A toerail is okay for toes, but an 8-inch-high bulwark really gives a good foothold.

The bulwark adds additional peace of mind in other ways, too. In the tropics it's a real pleasure for the whole crew to sleep on deck. A bulwark lets you select your favorite deck spot and keeps you and your bed on board.

Working vessels usually have a high bulwark that the crew half expects to be damaged when warping alongside quays and docks and when working cargo. It can be repaired relatively easily compared to the hull or deck and covering board. On your yacht this can be a real advantage in case you have a collision or something simply falls down on your boat. The bulwark will absorb some or maybe all of the initial shock and save you expensive repair bills.

Bulwarks with large open scuppers make possible a full-length adjustable lead.

This lead can be used for headsails as well as for attaching boom vang, preventers, and storm or riding sails. To attach a lead to the bulwark rail you use about 4 feet of 1-inch nylon parachute webbing (heavier for boats over 30 feet), lapped 4 inches and sewn strongly into a loop ([Figure 13.1](#)).



The bulwark on *Taleisin* not only keeps people (and things) on board but also serves the same purpose as a jib sheet track.

This loop is slipped under the bulwark scuppers and the snap-shackle of a snatch block joins the two ends of the loop above the rail. The block can then be held up snug to your lifelines with shock cord and a quick release snap-shackle. The tension of the shock cord is enough to locate the loops anywhere between bulwark stanchions. To adjust, you simply push the block down and slide the loop fore or aft. If a major adjustment is necessary, you have to unsnap the shock cord and remove the loop from the scuppers in order to move it forward or aft of the next bulwark stanchion. This may not be ideal for racing but is fine on a cruising boat.

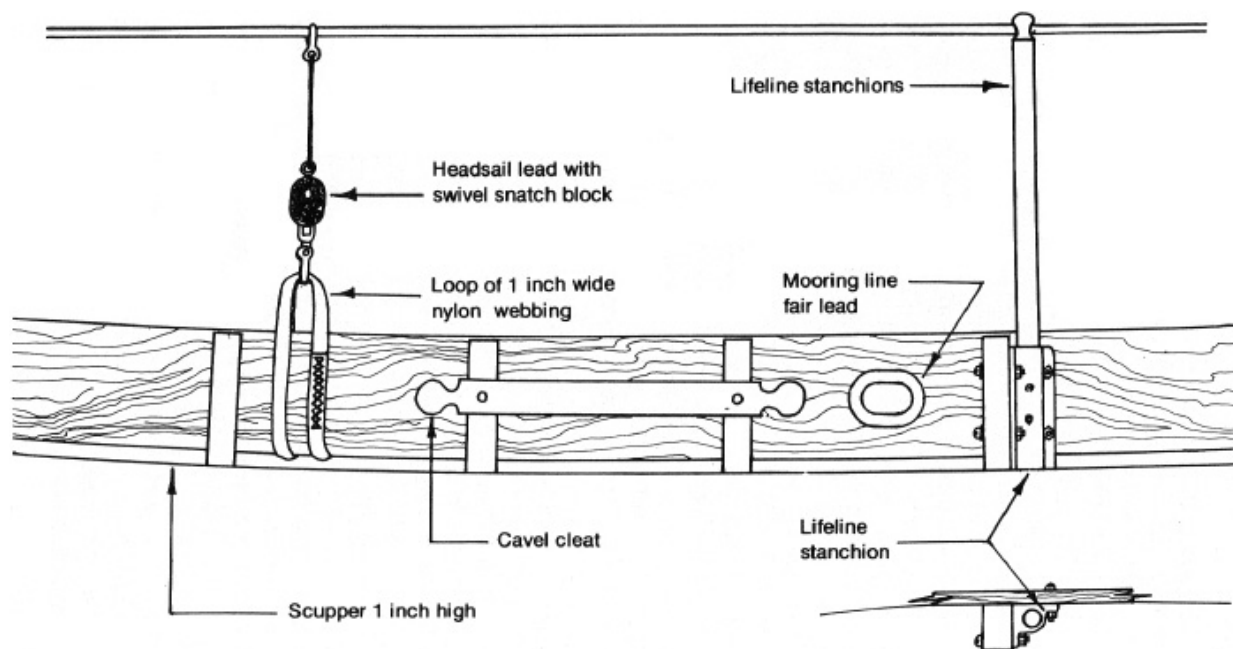


Figure 13.1

The scuppers under your bulwark rail should be open approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to allow good quick drainage and ease of adjusting jib leads. On *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin*, these scuppers are closed near the transom and bow, but I have seen them open full-length on other good cruising yachts.

In contrast to the traditionalists, I don't think a rail capping is necessary on a bulwark. It only costs more to fit and maintain. Without a caprail the jib leads have nothing to chafe.

I had hawse holes (fairleads) amidships in both *Seraffyn's* and *Taleisin's* bulwark which are very strong and handy, as the spring lines can't jump out. You can also fit large wooden cleats on your yacht's bulwark—*cavels*, they're called—that are especially nice for making up mooring lines and keeping them up off the deck.

One of the weakest design features in the modern yacht is the way lifeline stanchions are attached to the deck. Many things can overstrain your stanchions, especially people climbing on board and hanging all of their weight on the top of one stanchion. The stanchion is like a long lever and can put enormous strain on the narrow base and the bolts holding it in place. Once I dropped a jib on *Seraffyn's* deck to have the next sea come on board,

dragging the sail over the lifelines. The jib filled with green water and bent the lifeline stanchions outboard to a 45-degree angle before I had time to haul the sail back on deck. Neither the base of the lifeline stanchion nor the covering board were damaged in any way because of the secure attachment offered by through-bolting the base not only to the deck but to the bulwark rail as well. (I prefer using heavy wall brass tubing for stanchions. Under extreme strain, they bend instead of buckling as stainless steel will. You can straighten the bent brass stanchion, using a vise with jaws made from hardwood.)

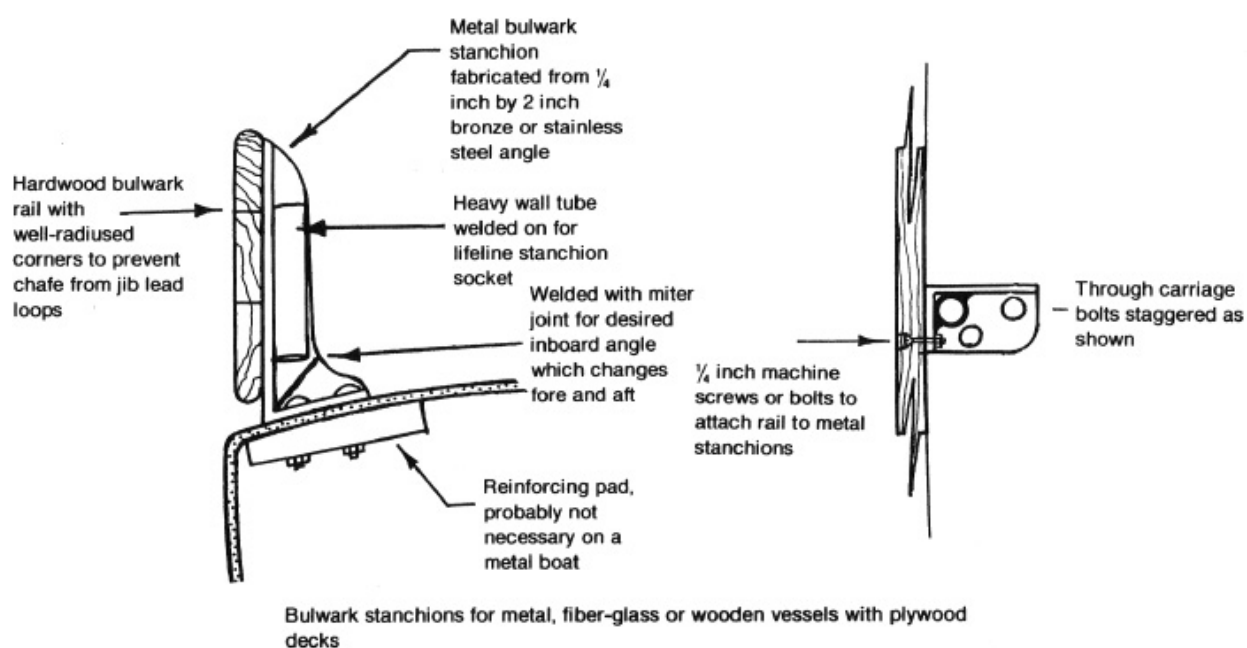


Figure 13.2

A traditional bulwark rail on a wooden yacht is expensive to install and requires a really good shipwright if you want a watertight job. On a fiberglass or metal (steel, aluminum) yacht, a bulwark can be installed (Figure 13.2) quite cheaply. The savings of not having to purchase genoa track, special lifeline stanchion bases, through-bolts, possible underdeck reinforcing, and fairleads could help pay for your bulwark rail. It would also give you a safer, more secure, and easier-to-sail cruising yacht.



SECTION V

Being Prepared Is the Name of the Game

One of the best things about ocean voyaging and cruising as a sport and pastime is its safety record. It's not like skiing, skydiving, gliding, motorcycling, or even bicycling. In all of those other undertakings your safety lies in someone else's hands, be it the pilot who lifts you off, other skiers on the slope, or motorists on the road. Once you sail out the breakwaters, a good watch will eliminate almost all danger of injury or loss due to other people's negligence. Your own preparations, skill, and care—and self-sufficiency—will make you safe.

Even better is that this is an outdoor pursuit where age doesn't matter. Physical prowess has little to do with the success of a cruise. You're not over the hill at forty-five or fifty-five or sixty-five. Instead if you continue to voyage successfully, the older you get, the more respect you tend to earn.

So, it is a pursuit for anyone who is willing to accept its most basic premise. The success of a cruise is in direct proportion to the amount of preparation you put in. That preparation doesn't stop after you've outfitted the boat and bought all of your charts. It has to include careful consideration and reconsideration of situations that still lie in the future.

14

Make Your Cruising Drag Free



Written by Larry

If you trust your ground tackle, cruising can be heaven. You'll be able to lay at anchor and get a good night's sleep. Because you know your boat is safe, you won't think twice before going ashore for dinner or a day of sight-seeing. There is nothing that can ruin your cruising as much as the fear of dragging. Unfortunately the art of drag-proof anchoring is usually learned the hard way, by dragging across a bay at 0200 on a stormy night, or by being hit when some other hapless sailor drags into you. But a careful look at anchoring techniques, a defensive attitude toward your choice of anchorage, and a look at all of the equipment needed for handling ground tackle in changing conditions, can make these lessons less frequent.

ALL ABOUT SCOPE

In Puerto Andraitx, Mallorca, we watched a high-bowed 45-foot ketch drag in a 25-knot wind. The owner tried to reset his anchor at least six or seven times. Finally he gave up and tied alongside a fishing boat at the

quay. We'd been in Andraitx for four months and we had to break out our anchor with our winch each time we wanted to go sailing so we knew the holding was fine. The man on the ketch was using good ground tackle, heavy chain, and a large CQR anchor. He later told me, "My echo sounder showed 15 feet of water, so I put out 45 feet of chain. Should have been enough. Must be poor holding ground."

I had sounded that area with a leadline and knew there was 18 feet of water and the tidal range was only 12 inches. So his transducer was probably 3 feet below his waterline and hadn't been calibrated to allow for the difference. Secondly, he was obviously not including the 5 feet from the water to his bow roller in his calculations. This additional eight feet added to his 15-foot sounder reading gives a total of 23 feet from bow roller to bottom. The absolute minimum scope for anchoring with chain is three-to-one which means he needed 69 feet to be safe. My preference is five-to-one scope or a minimum of 90 feet in shallow anchorages, no matter what the depth. Chain doesn't do you any good in the locker.

For proper scope, especially in shallow anchorages, you must figure your bow roller heights and measure water depths accurately then add an allowance for any possible rise in the tide. It is also important to check the depth contours on your chart carefully before you anchor. At Isla Cabrera near Mallorca, Spain, the military commander told us about ten yachts that had anchored in the only possible place, a shallow narrow shelf near his headquarters. A Force 10 squall blew through the anchorage. Six of the ten yachts dragged just a short distance and their anchors dragged over the edge of the five-fathom shelf into 20 fathoms where they hung straight down. All six ended up on the rocky lee side of the bay. If they had been anchored on a gently sloping bottom, the crews could have had time to let out extra scope or set out a second anchor as the boat dragged. If your chart shows little dragging room in the anchorage, put down extra scope or set two anchors when you first hook up.

ANCHORING DEFENSIVELY

Anchoring defensively is an art. Hedging your bets by being out of harm's way will save you the work of repairing banged-up topsides and mending frayed tempers. Choose the dead center of the anchorage if you can. This gives you maximum room to swing on your scope, the most time to react if you do drag, and the easiest spot to sail out of when you weigh anchor. Before you let go of your anchor, consider who you want as neighbors. Let's say you have two spots where you can anchor. One is to leeward of a husky ketch with an all-chain rode. This boat is riding stoically to the gusts that periodically rake the harbor. Your other choice is to leeward of a lightweight racing sloop, one that is sailing back and forth across its nylon rode, coming up short at the end of each lunge. If you have to anchor to leeward of one of these, it's almost always safest to choose the one riding to all chain. The yacht with the nylon rode could foul something such as an old hunk of metal that is rotting on the bottom, chafe through its rode, and come crashing down on you. If the wind is strong, the weight and windage of this extra boat could start your anchor dragging too. This scenario happens all too often, especially in favorite weekend anchorages near major cities or in ancient harbors with decades of rusty metal waiting on the bottom to chafe through an anchor line.

Now that many cruisers are choosing catamarans, the old adage, birds of a feather flock together should be part of your anchoring strategy. Cats and monos react differently to gusts of wind and changes of current. So if you are on a monohull, anchor well clear of cats, and vice versa.

If you anchor with all chain, you will have to give yachts with nylon rode a wide berth. In a harbor with changeable winds and tides, your chain will lie on the bottom and your boat will move only if there is a fairly good wind or the tide is quite strong. Then your boat will move slowly with the chain dragging over the bottom, but vessels with nylon rodes will quickly swing the length of their scope and could bash into you before your boat has reacted.

Lay your ground tackle carefully to prevent dragging. If you dump your chain on top of your anchor, chances are the whole mess will foul and drag. You must spot your anchor where you want it, then slowly play out scope

without pulling on the anchor at all as you drift or motor astern. Only secure the chain when you have paid out full scope. Then set the anchor.

A trip line is a very handy recovery gadget, especially in old harbors with centuries of junk on the bottom, but it too must be carefully set. In northern Spain I managed to get my trip line half-hitched around my own anchor chain and it towed my anchor backwards. I have since been careful to throw the trip line and buoy well away before letting the anchor go.

During a delivery trip we were anchoring in Funchal, Madeira, at night. It was a fairly deep, rocky anchorage, famous for fouled anchors. So we attached a trip line to the smallest fender we could find on board, one that was eight inches in diameter. Then we tried to set the anchor. It didn't hold. The buoy didn't submerge, but after two tries we realized the trip line was too short and the buoy was holding the 75-pound Herreshoff anchor just off the bottom. We lengthened the trip line and the anchor bit in.

MED MOORING

In the Mediterranean, anchoring stern-to the quay or docks is space-efficient in the small manbuilt harbors. But if your anchor moves or drags six to ten feet, your rudder, transom, or windvane will be bashing against the dock. Your windvane, which would be the first thing to hit the quay, is a very expensive piece of gear to replace. Choosing to anchor stern-to is therefore a risk proportionate to the amount of fetch in the harbor. In places like Rhodes Harbor in Greece, the yacht basin is fully enclosed and only about 500 feet across—which means no anchor-dislodging sea can build up. But in Palma, Mallorca, the town quay is open to the south for about one mile. A nasty short sea can build up quickly in a southerly blow, which will leave your stern pumping up and down dangerously close to the quay. In this situation we would normally anchor bow to and use a dinghy to reach shore. But if you do choose to anchor stern to, you must anchor defensively. Use twice the scope you normally would so you can pull yourself 50 feet away from the quay in a moderate blow. When you decide to leave, this

extra scope will make it easier to winch yourself out to your anchor and give you more maneuvering room as you maneuver away from the quay.

Leaving your boat unattended while it is moored Mediterranean-style is asking for trouble, or at least minor damage. While we were in Majorca, twenty-nine of the forty-five yachts tied to the harbor wall were sunk in Palma harbor when a strong southerly summer squall blew in and lasted less than an hour.

When you are tied stern to, pay attention when other yachtsmen near you are picking up their anchors to leave. Quite often anchors and chains get crisscrossed. When your neighbor lifts his anchor, he can pull yours up accidentally. A great tangle usually ensues, tempers are frayed, and quite often the anchor of any untended yacht is simply dropped right back in the bay with no attempt made to reset it properly. The man who was not on board when his anchor was disturbed could come home to see his stern bashing the dock.

I think this bears repeating: always keep someone on board when you are anchored Mediterranean-style. When any boat near you leaves, check your anchor by winching your chain up tight to confirm it is still well set.

Whenever possible, we prefer anchoring off and using our dinghy to get ashore. It's usually safer, more private, cleaner, and easier in the long run. Unfortunately in some Mediterranean ports this just isn't possible because of space limitations. In that case, our choice is to lie bow to with a stern anchor set. This way, if all our anchoring precautions fail, our infinitely less vulnerable bobstay and bronze-strapped stem will be the part of the boat that touches first. This method has one other advantage: it keeps people from staring down the companionway, so we have more privacy.

A final note on anchoring with your stern towards a quay. Be sure to check the depths near and astern of your rudder before you settle in. We always got into the dinghy after we'd secured our lines and also sounded a bit to each side of the boat to be sure there were no hidden rocks that could be a danger if the wind and sea got up. A leadline is very handy for this use (and many others). You don't need a formal leadline, even a winch handle tied to a length of line will help you insure your rudder is in the clear.

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE DRAGGING

During our first cruise to Mexico a fierce rain squall came through our anchorage at Agua Verde in Baja California and cut visibility to almost nothing. That's when I learned how to tell if I was dragging when I couldn't see the shore to take bearings. Almost immediately after the first blast of wind, the boat began laying beam to and I wasted valuable time taking the jib off the bowsprit, hoping the reduced windage would allow the boat to head into the wind. Then it dawned on me that the boat was laying beam to the wind because we were dragging. I immediately dropped 150 feet of chain and the boat headed into the wind. When daylight came we were only yards away from the rocks. So we learned a cheap lesson. If you are laying beam to the wind and there is no tidal current, your anchor is dragging.

In less dramatic situations, a few moments spent looking at your chain while it is under tension can tell you if you are dragging. If the chain lifts slowly in the gusts, then lowers itself slowly as the tension eases, you are holding. But if the chain is bobbling in a jerky fashion when it takes the strain, this is a transmission of the anchor bumping and slipping along the bottom.

CHOOSING YOUR ANCHOR AND RODE

There have been hundreds of thousands of words written about which anchor is best for this or that type of holding ground. Advertisers have stressed stowability, low cost, or light weight as selling points for their product. But the self-sufficient offshore voyager should look at the facts for himself and carry a variety of the *heaviest* anchors he and his crew can handle. When the chips are down, anchors and the gear to handle them are your only insurance. On *Taleisin*, which is an 8-ton, 30-footer, I carried three types of anchors: a 35-pound CQR as a working anchor, a 65-pound folding fisherman (the one designed by Nat Herreshoff and made by P. E. Luke peluke.com/marine-hardware/boat-anchors/) for storm use, and a 20-pound high-tensile Danforth for a stern hook.

In his book, *The Commonsense of Yacht Design*, L. Francis Herreshoff says of his grandfather's original design, "Here is a perfectly proportioned instrument, and if the shotgun and the violin can be said to have reached their final state of perfection, here we see the final perfect state of the anchor." But your rode can wrap around the fluke of your Herreshoff and drag the anchor backwards ([Figure 14.1](#)). The fisherman holds well in most bottoms and it's the best anchor for rock or weed. But if there is a chance of swinging, you need to set two anchors to prevent fouling.

On a straight pull in sand or firm mud, the lightweight stockless anchors of the Danforth type hold better than the fisherman. But in soft mud I have felt the lightweight flat palmed anchor floating along the bottom instead of digging in. If the lightweight anchor is dug into firm mud and has to reset itself due to a 180-degree wind shift, a lump of mud can jam between flukes and shank so the flukes don't hinge over and reset into new ground ([Figure 14.2](#)). I once brought my Danforth anchor up backwards with the chain wrapped around the rectangular hinge plate after three days in La Paz with a daily tidal stream that ran at up to four knots and always seemed to change directions when I was just falling off to sleep. With a Danforth you should use two anchors if there is a chance of changing winds or strong tides. Also choose one that is at least 50 percent heavier than suggested by the manufacturer. All of the lightweight anchors sold today are welded together (and in some cases only spot welded). We've seen literally hundreds of lightweight and stockless-type anchors being straightened and rewelded in shipyards and machine shops around the world. The lightweight anchor's straight-pull holding power, with its large fluke area is just too great for its construction.

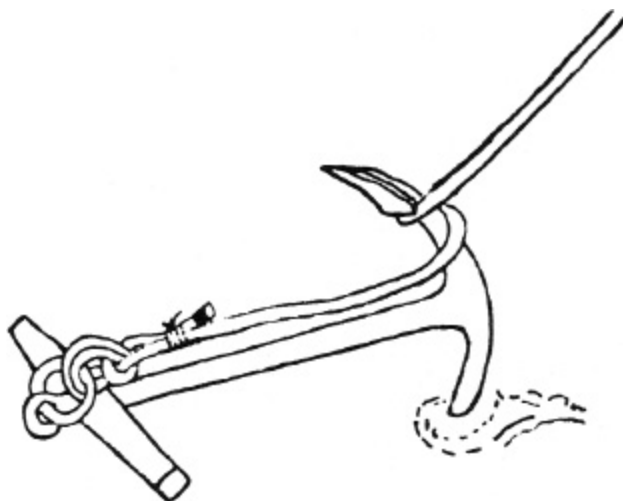
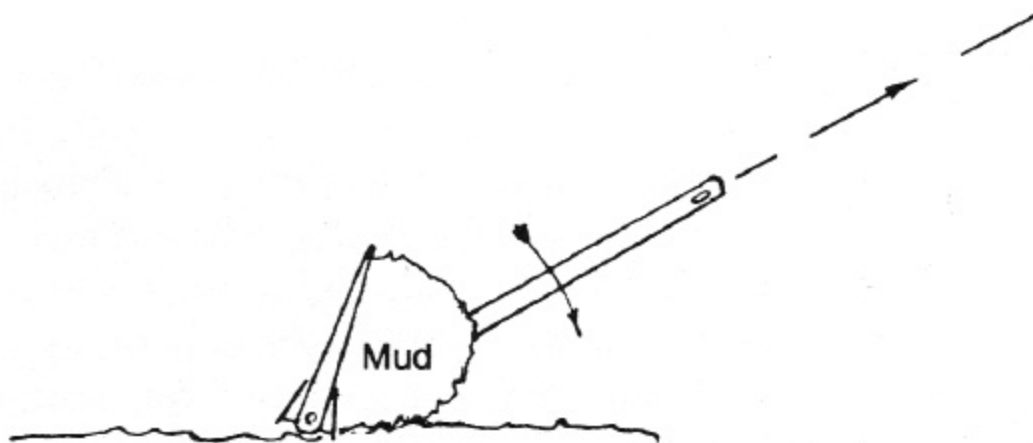


Figure 14.1



Brain coral or other objects could foul a stockless anchor in the same manner.

Figure 1.2

The genuine drop-forged CQR was the favorite for the majority of cruising sailors until other similar anchors such as the Bruce or more recently the Delta and Fortress style anchors came onto the market. All of these anchors work on a similar premise. As our CQR never once let us down, I am definitely prejudiced and would choose the same today. With any of these anchors you can swing on tide or wind with only one anchor set with confidence, because they have no protuberances to grab chain as it rumbles past. One thing I like about the CQR as opposed to the newer

designs is the hinged shank swings across to follow the line of strain and the flukes remain embedded in the bottom. As strains increase the fluke rotates to align with the shank. But while I am a proponent of this kind of anchor, it must be noted that it and other large single-fluke anchors have three catches that I know of. First, although it holds well in sand, shell, or gravel and is excellent in mud, it is not as good as the fisherman for penetrating weed to get down to a firm bottom. Second, they have a bad habit of jamming under large boulders—so it is wise to carry a fisherman anchor to use as a backup. Third, each of these must be used with plenty of adequate-sized chain to hold the stock down and allow the anchor to dig into hard-sand bottoms.¹

Just as your anchor type will contribute to your safety, so does the way you attach it to your vessel. Whatever your position on line versus chain for anchoring, it is interesting to note that insurance companies won't allow anything but chain rodes on commercial ships. The weight of chain acts as a shock absorber so a minimal amount of upward force is exerted on the shank of your anchor until all of the chain is lifted. Because of its weight, chain lies on the bottom and is less likely to loop and foul your anchor. And, if chain rubs against something sharp, it won't chafe through and let you go for an unscheduled moonlight sail. Chain has its drawbacks, however: it is expensive, and it is heavy—which means you need an anchor winch to handle it. It's sometimes dirty, and it must be stowed carefully each time you use it so it doesn't jam in the chain locker or hawsepipe when you next try to anchor. But none of these drawbacks affects the holding power of your ground tackle. And for extended cruising you spend a lot of your time at anchor, so the weight and cost of chain becomes secondary to complete dependability.

Nylon rope has its uses, too. My second anchor bower on *Taleisin* is 300 feet of 3-strand nylon with 30 feet of 5/16-inch high-test chain. If I was going to replace it, I would choose nylon 8 plait which is more pliable and easy to handle, while being just as strong. If I need a second anchor set, this is much easier to row out with a dinghy. It rarely picks up mud. Nylon is extremely strong because of its elasticity and in a ground swell will not jerk

the anchor out of the bottom or make crashing noises in its chock. With nylon you can use a sheet winch for an anchor winch. Overall, lightweight stockless anchors and nylon bowers are cheaper than chain and forged anchors. That's why this type of gear has become standard on racing boats which rarely lay at anchor.

Nylon line has a special use even if you have an all-chain rode. For safety, 50 feet of heavy nylon should be shackled to the inboard end of your chain to act as a shock absorber in case of swell build-up in an ultimate storm. The end of the nylon should be tied around something very strong, such as a Samson post with a round turn and two half-hitches. This knot will allow you to untie the bitter-end of your rode if you have to slip the cable and get out of the anchorage in a hurry. Simply tie the nylon end to a spare fender so you can pick up your gear later (don't use a bowline to secure the inboard end as it cannot be untied under strain). Another advantage to the nylon snubber on the inboard end of your chain is that it works as an emergency shock absorber in case the clutch of your winch fails and the chain starts to roar out. Three hundred feet of chain can build up an incredible speed and in some cases, it will even start to smoke due to the friction on your cat head. A 50-foot motor yacht in the Caribbean had this happen. The end of their chain was shackled to one of the through-bolts holding their stem together. When the chain came up short, it imploded the stem and left a 2-foot-by-2-foot hole just below their waterline. The boat sank. The stretch in the 50-foot nylon snubber would have minimized this terrific jerk and saved the boat.

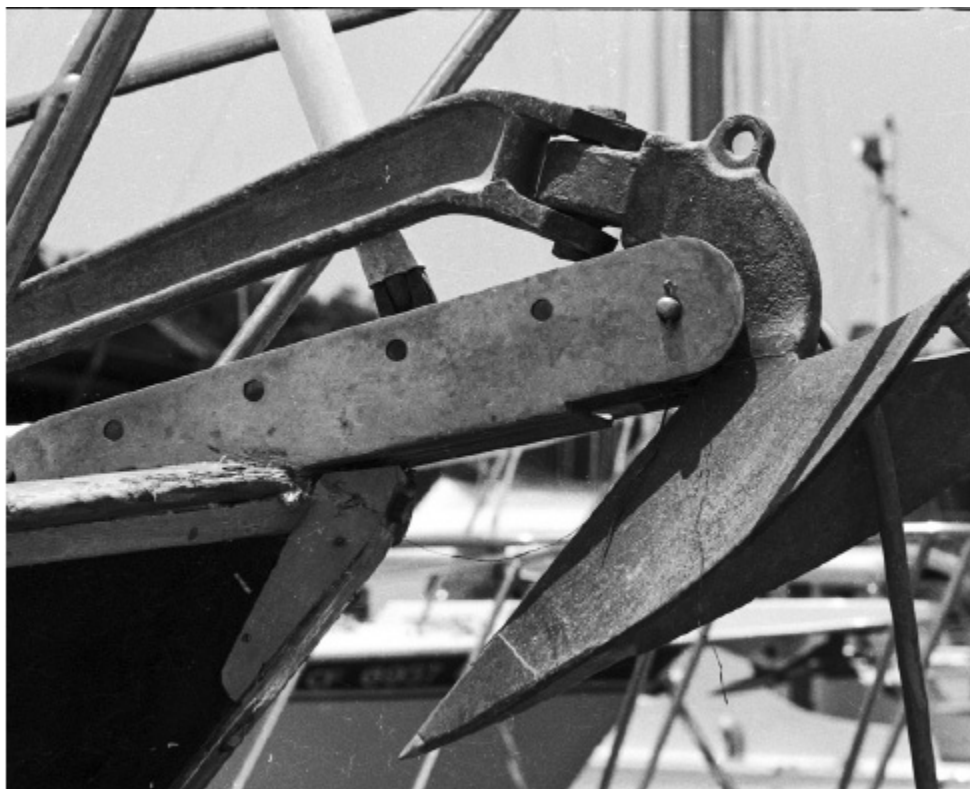


In a hurricane situation like this, chain makes you feel you've got a little extra in hand.

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUICK – AND EFFICIENT – DEPLOYMENT

Getting an anchor out quickly can save your ship if you go aground, especially if the tide is falling or a swell and wind are pushing her onshore. You must get her off quickly. TIME IS VITAL. That is why I really liked having a hard rowing dinghy on board. It is always ready to launch. For those using inflatable tenders it pays to have yours ready to go and inflated on deck whenever you are cruising near shore. If you do accidentally go aground, you won't have time to dig out the inflatable, pump it up, put on the outboard, and hope it starts.

Before you go off cruising, it pays to practice getting an anchor into the dinghy and kedged out just like it pays to have man-overboard drills.



This fairlead has all the faults: nothing to keep the line from jumping out, sharp edges, and weak construction.

Unship the dinghy. Put the anchor in first. Then flake the anchor rode in carefully so it will run easily. If you have a hard dinghy, consider adding a fairlead in the dinghy that is protected with brass half round (a dip in the transom just like a sculling lock works perfectly). Place the anchor and rode in the stern of the hard dinghy and as you row away from the grounded vessel, place your foot on the anchor rode to keep it from running out too quickly. If you use an inflatable which is dependent on an outboard motor, place the anchor and rode in the bow of the boat. Then, instead of using forward gear on your motor, put the motor in reverse and back away from the stricken vessel, once again finding a position for your body that will let you control how quickly the line pays out. You'll find that by reversing you have no trouble steering the dinghy (a trick that works just as well when or if you have to use your inflatable to tow your yacht). Nylon line with a short length of chain is the easiest to handle in this situation. That is why we have a second bower (bow anchor rode) readily available to load in the dinghy.

I have learned that a stem dinghy is a must for rowing anchors out in winds over Force 6 with choppy seas. The fine bow cuts through the chop and also carries better with each oar stroke than a pram does. An inflatable is even worse than a pram in these conditions.

When we were sailing down the Red Sea we hooked up behind a reef to wait out a gale. The next morning the wind increased, and I tried to row out my second anchor in our 6-foot, 8-inch fiberglass pram. I just couldn't make headway against the 3-foot chop that built up in the ¼ mile between us and the reef.

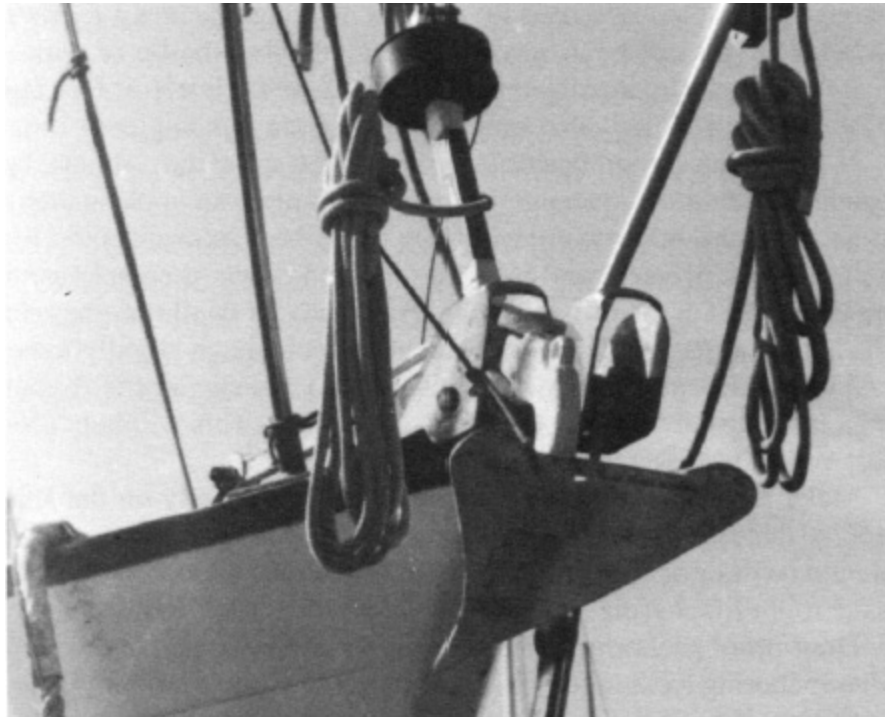
I wanted that anchor out so we could get a good night's sleep. There were unlit coral reefs to leeward of us. I tied a fender to my 12-pound lightweight anchor on 200 feet of ¾-inch nylon. Then I put on my fins and mask and swam to windward with the floating anchor while Lin paid out the cable. It was remarkably easy to swim against the seas. I untied the fender and lowered the anchor to the bottom when I was about 200 feet to windward and well to port of my main anchor. Then I returned to the boat

by sliding along the $\frac{3}{8}$ - inch line. I did the same trick with my 35-pound fisherman attached to three fenders. But this time I pulled myself and the large anchor out hand-over-hand along the small nylon anchor line, and as I approached the small anchor I was careful not to get above it. I let the second larger anchor free from the three fenders, and Lin winched it in tight. I then pulled myself over to the 12-pounder, fenders tied to my waist. I broke the small anchor loose, and Lin reeled me in while I hung onto the anchor. I'd never once been detached from *Seraffyn*. We slept well that night, and since then mask, snorkel, and fins have been added to our list of necessary anchoring equipment.

An anchor winch is at the top of this list. Even Joshua Slocum had one on his low-budget *Spray*. I wouldn't consider cruising without one. Lin can handle our anchors because of our winch. She can easily let the clutch go, and our CQR, which lives hooked onto our bobstay, falls to the bottom. Lin can also crank in the chain and re-hook the anchor by herself with no fear of a strained back. I think this is one of the main limiting factors on the size of boat two people can enjoy owning: what size of storm anchor can the weakest regular crew member carry and handle with confidence? The proper anchor winch will increase this size.

On boats smaller than 35 feet a good hand-operated anchor windlass made of bronze or galvanized malleable iron is the key to ground tackle handling. I have seen many serious problems with aluminum-cast winches. Bronze, iron, and aluminum winches will all seize up if they are not greased periodically. This will not cause any serious problems on bronze or iron winches. You'll have to take them apart, loosen up the seized parts, grease, and reassemble them. With an aluminum winch, the white oxide caused by salt water expands in all the bolt and shaft holes and makes disassembly extremely difficult. Cap screws break off, and the corrosion expansion is often so extreme the castings will crack next to a shaft or bolt. I have seen this happen on some of the best winches built of so-called marine alloys. Give aluminum anchor winches a miss and get yourself a good strong reliable bronze or iron one with separate gypsies, one for rope and one for

chain. Make sure they can be used independently so you can set a second anchor while the first one is locked in place on its own gypsy.



This is a well-designed, strongly built fairlead.

When you order an anchor winch, be sure to send the manufacturer 12 inches of the exact anchor chain you plan to use. Chain link sizes vary between US, English, and metric sizes. The manufacturers usually have various chain gypsies and can only guarantee to send you the correct one if you supply a chain sample.

FINALLY, A WORD ABOUT FAIRLEADS

Things can sure go wrong if your chain fairlead bends, breaks, or allows the chain to jump out in a swell. The chain can literally saw right through your deck in a very short time. Chain is a real danger to bare hands if it ever gets loose. Your fairleads should be strong enough so that the outboard lip can't bend when the chain exerts a side load. This can be achieved by strengthening the lip or with a bolt through the lip into the

inboard plate of the fairlead just forward of the roller. This will also keep the chain from jumping out.

Make sure your fairleads are well flared, especially on the side lips, so that line rode will not be chafed. The width of the bow roller should be three or four times the diameter of your anchor line so you have room for chafing gear.

Drag-proof anchoring is a combination of proper gear and defensive anchoring techniques. It should be every sailor's primary insurance plan. When all else fails, your anchor, ready to use, is your ace in the hole. It can save your boat, and, most important, it could save the lives of your crew. When you are exploring foreign waters and especially off-the-beaten-track cruising grounds, you'll find marinas are few and far between, expensive, and crowded. Most of your time will be spent at anchor. Reliable, non-dragging anchoring gear—and methods—are a must for safe, enjoyable, worry-free cruising.

1 I am concerned that many discussions of anchoring seem to focus in on “What type of anchor do you like best.” I think you should consider your total anchoring system. Therefore, in our book *The Capable Cruiser* Lin and I have written three chapters that focus on this approach, including an in-depth look at selecting chain.

15

The Self-sufficient Sailor's Emergency Abandon-Ship Kit



Written by Larry

Years ago someone asked Jean Gau, “What about a lifeboat?” Gau, who had crossed the Atlantic eleven times and circumnavigated twice on his ketch *Atom*, was known for his self-reliant attitude. He simply answered, “*Atom* is my lifeboat.”

We agreed completely, especially when we considered that at 24 feet on deck, *Seraffyn* is about the same size as most ship’s lifeboats. So we worked at every method we knew of to make sure she stayed afloat. We carried the same attitude onward when we finished building *Taleisin*, which at 29 feet 6 inches is the length of many ships’ lifeboats.

After one eye-opening encounter with a large ship late at night early in our cruising career, when we were hundreds of miles from the nearest shipping lane, we decided to stand watches at all times except in very heavy fog when we felt we could depend on the 30-foot long radar reflector inside *Seraffyn*’s hollow wooden spar. That exception went by the wayside when we were crossing the North Pacific. One morning, after almost ten days of

pea-soup fog, the fog lifted just as we were waking. We both rushed out into the cockpit to enjoy the respite and were shocked to see a ship passing within a few hundred yards of us. After that, fog or no fog, we always kept watches at sea.

To further give us peace of mind, each year we both did separate inspections of *Seraffyn* and later *Taleisin*, inside and out, just as if we were surveyors to ensure little chance of hull or mast failure.

A few years into our first voyage, when we arrived in Gibraltar, we met three young English sailors who'd been hit amidships by a Portuguese fishing boat late at night 40 miles out at sea. *Piratical Pippet*, their well-found wooden Folkboat, was badly sprung in the collision. Barry, Will, and Gordon could not have kept her afloat long enough to reach port. And so, they nearly lost their boat (it was saved when Barry, who is a judo expert, leaped onto the deck of the fishing boat during the confusion in the aftermath of the collision and threatened bodily harm to the Portuguese captain unless he towed *Piratical Pippet* into port).

Just a year earlier we'd read how Peer Tangvald had been sailing 50 miles off the mouth of the Orinoco River in his 32-foot *Dorthea* and collided with a submerged log. *Dorothea* was holed and, in spite of his attempts to patch her, Peer had to abandon ship and seek safety in his 8-foot sailing dinghy. He sailed 125 miles in his tiny lifeboat and reached one of the Caribbean islands.

These two incidents, plus a rash of stories about collisions with whales which sank boats—the Robertson's *Luccette* and their whale encounter which left them to drift for 47 days before being rescued, for example, and, the sinking of Maralyn and Maurice Bailey's 31-foot plywood sloop and their 117 days adrift in a defective liferaft – combined to make us consider that for all of our care there could be a time when we'd have to abandon *Seraffyn* and take to our sailing dinghy.

We'd already been convinced that rubber liferafts were not the answer. The Baileys, during their 117 days adrift, had no way of propelling themselves into shipping lanes which lay less than 100 miles away. A French couple drifted in their liferaft for twelve days within sight of the

island of Mallorca and couldn't reach it for lack of propulsion. Our solution to the idea of hapless drift? A refit of our 7-foot fiberglass dinghy, which included installing sealed buoyancy tanks and fitting it so the oars and all the sailing gear were secured inside the dinghy when we went to sea.

If there was absolutely no doubt *Seraffyn* was sinking and we had a bit of time before we had to abandon ship, we would be able to set the whole affair in the cockpit right-side-up, to be ready and waiting for us while we tried to keep *Seraffyn* afloat. If we had almost no time at all, we would have to launch the dinghy then set up the gear once we cast off. Both of these contingencies were possible. And just as important: we would never leave the mother ship (*Seraffyn*, or the yacht we might happen to be delivering) until she actually sank under us. There have been too many cases of yachts being abandoned then found drifting later while the crew and lifeboat were never recovered.

If time was shorter than five or ten minutes, we could just let the dinghy and its equipment float free, then right it once the mother ship sank. We'd have both sail and oar power so we could work at rescuing ourselves instead of sitting and hoping a passing ship would see us. We'd also be more visible than a liferaft with *Cheeky's* 14-foot-high striped sail. With this plan arranged and a bit of practice carried out, we forgot all about abandoning-ship plans other than preparing the dinghy when we stored it on the cabin top chocks for any voyage of over 30 miles.

It was during the winter of 1976-77 that we made the final decision to leave Malta and head east through the Red Sea, across the Indian Ocean, and eventually to the North Pacific. This was the first time our cruising plans included more than a single long-distance voyage in one year. An old friend who was also wintering in Malta sold his cruising boat, then insisted, "You take my Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon. I'll worry a bit less about you when you are in the middle of the Indian Ocean." His concern and careful analysis of the lack of shipping lanes over the routes we planned to travel finally led us to consider making up some kind of emergency pack that would be ready inside the dinghy if we did have to abandon ship. We looked at a few commercial packs, ones that were used in

life-rafts for racing boats. They were far too expensive and also planned for seamen who would sit and wait for rescue. The commercial kits in no way met our requirements. So we gathered up the stores and equipment that would help us independently work at survival in a small dinghy while we tried sailing to a busy shipping lane or toward land. The kit we finally packed weighed about 30 pounds and fits inside a 10 inch by 25 inch round canvas bag. It was packed so salt water and exposure would do no damage.

After completing our circumnavigation on *Seraffyn*, and while we were building her bigger sister *Taleisin*, we began discussing these ideas with Steve Callahan, the yacht designer who had spent 76 days adrift in his liferaft. He was working up ideas for a folding hard dinghy/liferaft combo. We had hoped his ideas came to fruition before we were ready to set sail. This wasn't to be, so instead Larry built the plug for what became the Fatty Knees 8-footer, a Lyle Hess designed lapstrake fiberglass stem dinghy. We then outfitted it to serve as an emergency life-boat.¹ The gear we carried in the abandon ship bag on *Taleisin* differed little from the one we'd carried on *Seraffyn*. The list below lists the contents of *Taleisin's* Abandon Ship Kit.

CONTENTS

All of the items including the two sealed containers fit snugly into a square-ended synthetic fabric duffle bag, the type readily available as overnight bags.

Loose in emergency abandon-ship bag:

EPIRB

6 handheld red flares, 4 rocket flares in waterproof pouches

2 orange smoke flare

1 collapsible 10" radar reflector

1 watermaker (reverse osmosis hand pump watermaker, now sold as the Katadyn Survivor 06)

- 1 Dacron cover for forward third of dinghy (protection from sun and spray)
- 4 x 1-gallon foldable water bags (from wine in a box container) hand-bearing compass

In a tightly sealed and taped 2-gallon plastic container such as the kind paint is sold in:

- 10 cans fruit nectar
- 10 cans meat pate
- 1 pound glucose candies
- As many energy bars as will fit around other items

In a second sealed 2-gallon rugged plastic container (we stitched up a canvas bucket cover with strong shrouds which went over one of these buckets so it could be is rigged to be used as a sea anchor):

- 3 pencils
- Pad of paper
- Passports or photocopies of passports
- Driver's license copies
- 200 dollars
- Small container of two-part underwater putty
- Water resistant 1½" wide tape (duct tape)
- 40 multi-vitamin pills
- 2 rolls surgical gauze
- Hand care cream (medicated)
- Extra strong sun block cream
- 3 sizes Dacron sail thread, 200 feet each, plus small tube of needles
- Sharpening stone
- Fishing trident (3- or 4-pronged spear with barbs)

- 100 feet of $\frac{1}{8}$ " line
- Knife
- Miniature can opener
- 3 fishing lures
- 12 assorted fish hooks ($\frac{1}{2}$ " to 1", single and three prong)
- 20 feet leader line
- 10 feet $\frac{1}{16}$ " stainless steel seizing wire
- 2 white towels
- 1 signal mirror

Our kit was planned to assure survival for four or five days while we learned to live in the environment we found around us. We hoped it would provide the tools for self-sufficiency while we worked actively toward our own rescue. Further, the radar reflector mounted at the top of our 14-foot dinghy mast should send off a better return than a liferaft which would intermittently be hidden by any swell. We decided against including medicines other than the simplest first aid supplies, not only because of space limitations but because we've found communicable diseases are so rare away from crowds and land.

Both of us are intimately involved in the navigation on board, so we decided against trying to include charts of any sort in our kit. We both conferred daily on our position. We were both aware of the course we intended to sail toward land. I mark the positions on our chart as work out my sun or star sights. Lin records it in the log, then gives a daily estimate of our distance to land. Twice a week we consult our ocean passage charts which show both low-powered shipping lanes and high-powered commercial routes so we can plan extra careful watches when we cross these points. If we should have to abandon ship, we'd have a pretty good idea of which way to sail or row to find an area where traffic would make rescue more possible. If time allowed, we'd grab a sextant and a small-scale passage chart while we abandoned ship.

There is a tag on the outside of our emergency kit that states when it was last inspected. Once a year we disassemble and reconsider each item in it. Then we re-date the tag and store the bag under the cockpit, right next to the companionway where it is easy to reach when we set off on any new voyage. During the first morning at sea we follow a reassuringly familiar program. First we store all of the dinghy sailing equipment inside *Cheeky*, our Fatty Knees 8. Then we get the emergency kit and lash it in place under the dinghy's forward thwart. Next we lash one of the spare 5-gallon water jugs inside the dinghy. This done, we seal the chain locker hawsepipes, set up shoulder-high lifelines from the top of the boom gallows frame to the upper shrouds, and then remind each other, "*Don't fall overboard. If you do, you are dead.*" We then forget about "what ifs" and work at sailing well, keeping a good watch, and navigating carefully.

We did carry that first Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) with us for six months. But after careful consideration we decided to send it back to its owner before we sailed up the China Sea and across the North Pacific. First we noticed corrosion on many of its connections, even though it had been stored in a dry place inside *Seraffyn*. With our skeptical attitude toward electronic equipment, we figured it would be inoperable just when we did want to use it. We also felt that if we had the idea we could call for help, we might not prepare to take care of *Seraffyn* or ourselves as carefully. Eventually, as EPIRB technology increased and prices fell, and as our families seemed to worry ever more about us, we purchased our own beacon and carried it, remembering to test the batteries twice annually as we voyaged for 23 years on *Taleisin*.

But even though we carried that beacon, we often reminded ourselves of an incident that happened when we sailed away from Sri Lanka many years ago, before EPIRBs existed. The owner of a 50-foot sloop *Crusader* knew one of his spreaders had some dry rot in its end and his garboards (the area where the keel meets the planking) were leaking. "Don't worry," he told us, "There's never any rough weather between here and Singapore this time of year. Besides, I'm in contact with people twice a day on my ham radio so I can always get help if I need it." The Canadian yacht *Crusader*

was lost in an unseasonable typhoon ten days later with six hands on board. *Crusader's* ham-radio calls set off a massive search involving aircraft, ships, and airliners. The US Air Force flew over two days on a search pattern that covered 100,000 square miles of ocean. In spite of the diligent efforts of the another five days of searching by the Australian Air Force teams, assisted by the Malaysian authorities, no wreckage was ever spotted and the crew was never recovered. This search cost the Canadian, American, and Malaysian governments tens of thousands of dollars. Further, the ham reports worried our friends and family tremendously because we had left the same port bound for Malaysia at the same time. Other than worrying a lot of people and causing a massive search, the radio did no good. But some work on *Crusader's* keel or spreaders might have.

Sailing in all of its forms is one of the safest outdoor pursuits there is. For miles traveled, it is far safer than driving your car to the local mall to do the grocery shopping. But it's important to emphasize here: even more than while driving a car on streets used by millions of other people, your safety on a sailboat depends on you alone, using your skills and your training.

We assembled an emergency abandon ship kit for the same reason we carry a spare for every mechanical part of the boat: to ensure safe sailing. If you have a spare on board, you probably won't need it. If I felt sailing across oceans was so unsafe that our need for abandon ship equipment was more than a one-in-fifty-thousand chance, I wouldn't go to sea.

¹ In *Cost Conscious Cruiser* we have detailed the results of Steve Callahan's ideas along with those which converted our Fatty Knees 8-footer to serve as an emergency vessel. Unfortunately, New Zealand voyagers cannot be cleared to leave the country unless their boat and equipment conform to Category 1 offshore regulations which require they carry a liferaft. Several long-term voyagers who created their own solutions have chosen to rent a commercially produced liferaft for their first passage away from New Zealand, and then return it by mail.

16

Staying on Board



Written by Larry

In the beginning there was the spare jib sheet or a halyard tail. When a worried professional sailor had to go out on the bowsprit and tame a sail in rough weather, he grabbed the handiest line, secured it around his waist, and went to work. Then amateur sailors started making long offshore voyages for pleasure. They built themselves rough-weather harnesses for those times when they were worried about going forward without an extra bit of security. In the 1960s singlehanded voyaging developed into an ever-growing fad. Lone sailors realized no one was going to switch off their windvane and turn their boat around if they slipped overboard. So they started looking toward their rough-weather harness as a wear-it-all- the-time solution to the insecurity of singlehanded.

From there it was a simple step to the high-pressure offshore racing scene. Racing rules were breeding boats which stole some of the most important basic safety design features from the foredeck crew such as bulwark rails or high toe rails. The urge to win at any cost meant club racers had to discover some way of freeing their hands to change sails on

lightweight boats with wicked, skittery motions and insufficient handholds. So sailmakers and equipment companies started designing and marketing harnesses.

Unfortunately, the stories and advertisements these companies promoted started to push heavy-weather harnesses out of the category of equipment that was to be used for truly rough weather or emergency situations. Somehow sailors were convinced that these should be called safety harnesses and were meant to keep them from falling overboard no matter what—and save them even if they did. People began substituting this inexpensive, easy-to-buy piece of equipment for the knowledge and preparation that can actually keep you safe on an offshore boat.

A boat that is properly designed is the first step toward staying on board, even in the roughest weather. The first and foremost thing to look for on a good boat is a sea-kindly motion. A boat's motion is affected not only by its size and displacement but by its underbody design and weight distribution. A 35-foot fin-keel boat with 45 percent ballast ratio and high topsides will have a quicker, snappier motion in a seaway than a longer keeled, low freeboard boat with 35 percent ballast. That's the main problem with choosing a racing boat design for offshore voyaging. The racing boat may be faster in some conditions but its motion could increase the danger of falling overboard.

High deck structures and doghouses are features which provide below decks comfort but can diminish on-deck-at-sea safety by adding to a boat's motion. We had this demonstrated vividly when we delivered a 54-foot ketch across the Atlantic. Her heavy high deck house and solid plywood sun cover plus high topsides created such a wicked roll that we couldn't run dead downwind in safety. So we added 480 miles to our 2,800 mile voyage by tacking downwind. Even then, her motion was far worse than on board *Taleisin* or *Seraffyn* in the same winds and sea.

High deck structures, especially on boats where the mast goes through the cabin top, also present a safety risk as you maneuver around the boat. You have to climb up on the cabin top to hoist, lower, and reef your sails. The higher you climb, the farther you are from the boat's axis and the worse

the motion gets. For safe offshore sailing our first choice is always a boat with a one-level deck and working area. This means no climbing to reach the mast and no jumping off the cabin after you've lowered the sails.

Wide clear side decks are another design feature that will keep you safe at sea. Eighteen inches used to be considered the safe minimum. This let sailors move fore and aft confidently while they dragged a bagged sail behind them. Twenty-four inches was even nicer. That gave you plenty of room for those worrisome times when you felt crawling forward was the more prudent way to go. Unfortunately, many designers have sought ever more interior space by widening cabins until some side decks on so-called cruising boats are only a few inches wide. This interior spaciousness helps sell boats, especially to novices who aren't aware of on-deck safety at sea. But what they gain in inside space they lose in deck safety.

Cruising sailors have also violated this very important safety feature by using the clear side deck area for extra stowage. Fuel tanks, motorcycles, portable generators—and this is just the beginning of the list of gear we've seen cluttering this vital seagoing safety corridor.

Bulwarks or 5-inch-high toe rails are high on my list of seagoing keep-me-from-going-overboard design features. When a boat is heeled and water is washing along the side deck, anything lower just won't give you a foothold. Without these high rails, gear will slide off the boat if it is left free for even a moment. So instead of concentrating on moving carefully around the boat, you'll be lurching after the wayward winch handle.

Not all so-called non-skid decks are really non-skid, and this may be why so many newer sailors are leery of moving around even in calm weather without a rough-weather harness. There is a simple test you can try to check your deck's gripping ability. Pour some oil-based salad dressing on the deck, let it drain away so the deck is still damp looking, then pour salt water on, and test the grip both barefoot and in boat shoes. Bare teak, Treadmark, bare cedar, and painted sanded decks will pass this test. Many fiberglass patterned non-skid decks will turn into ice-skating surfaces. This may seem a strange test, but an overflow when you are filling your tanks, blow-by from your diesel vents, bits of greasy food, or even oil slicks at sea

can cause the same situation. If your footing is slippery, you'll always be a candidate for an unexpected, possibly lethal trip overboard.

A final but very important general design feature for at-sea safety is handholds. These include lifelines at least 24 to 30 inches high with stanchions that can stand the strain of a 200-pound man hitting them with a force that could equal 1,500 pounds. To withstand this, the stanchion bases must be bolted through the deck to some solid member of the deck framing. Screwed-down bases will rip loose. Cabin top handholds come next. These must be kept clear at sea. I've seen lovely handholds made useless by mops and boat hooks stored right where you wanted to grab. Finally, if you store your dinghy upside-down on the cabin, it should have handrails on its bottom. It pays to load your boat as if it's ready for sea, then practice going forward and aft on each tack in a rough sea. Make sure there are convenient, easy-to-grab handholds on each side and plan ways to keep them clear.

This quest for handholds, plus the need for good foot-resting places on each tack, make us uncomfortable on board a flush-decked yacht. A low cabin with its coach roof decorated with handholds gives you not only a place to cling to, but in rough seas the weather side of the cabin presents a place to brace your knees or back while you work storing sails and gear.

Once you've chosen a good, safe, seakindly boat, the sailing equipment you choose can keep you out of situations where falling overboard is a possibility. The majority of the boats I have seen out cruising since 2002 have roller furling, which means fewer trips to the foredeck. But for those who, like me, prefer hank-on sails, a jib downhaul will pull the flogging sail down while you stand next to the mast (see [Chapter 23, Section VI](#)).

For your mainsail, good jiffy-reefing gear with all of the control lines grouped near the mast will keep you from having to move around a canted, plunging deck. High-cut jibs with clew rings sewn into the sail and leather protectors outside the rings, secured with bowlines or sheetbends instead of shackles for the sheets, will make dodging lethal flying D rings a thing of the past. Gaskets (sail ties or stops) stored in several handy, easily

accessible places on the foredeck, amidships, and near the cockpit will cut down hunting trips when each unnecessary step could be dangerous.

Boom gallows aren't designed just to look salty. Nor are they just a convenient place to store the boom while you are in port. They are an important addition to the inventory of sailing equipment designed to keep you on board in rough weather. A properly set up boom gallows will give you a strong body support when you have to work at the stern of your boat. Even more important, the outboard upper corner of the gallows will make a firm support for seagoing, chest-high lifelines. I first used these on the 85-foot schooner *Double Eagle* during a round-trip voyage between Honolulu and Newport Beach. Bob Sloan, an experienced delivery skipper, rigged chest-high lines between the gallows frame and each set of shrouds so the crew had bulwarks, normal lifelines, plus the chest line to grab on the way fore and aft. I adapted this extra lifeline on both of our boats so going forward even in rough weather feels easier, and is easier. I also figured out ways to rig up a shoulder-high line on several of the boats we delivered across oceans. The pick-up crew all commented on how much they liked this simple addition.

Easy-to-release and easy-to-retrieve ground tackle may seem unrelated to staying on board at sea. But if you must enter a small port during heavy weather it is imperative that your ground tackle be ready to let go. If this means climbing around the foredeck handling heavy anchors, or searching for shackles and rode ends, you'll be out where the motion is difficult and the danger of slipping imminent. This is why we choose to carry our main anchor made up at all times and ready to release. One of us goes forward for moments only to make sure the anchor is clear and the winch handle ready for use. The less time you spend on the foredeck in a seaway, the less chance you have to slip overboard.

Proper sailing techniques keep you on board where you belong. The most important of these is: don't be over-canvassed. Shorten down when you first think of it, not when all hell breaks loose. It's better to be under-canvassed for a while than risk sending crew onto the foredeck when the squall is already on top of you. With or without a bowsprit, it pays not only

to take sail down before the stronger wind hits but, if you are using hanked-on sails, to remove that extra sail from the bow and store it completely away. We once lashed our small genoa down on the bowsprit to ride out what looked like a quick, soon-to-pass squall in the North Pacific 800 miles west of Vancouver. Three hours later the squall proved to be the forerunner of a two-day, 55-knot storm. So instead of removing that jib when the seas were relatively calm, I had to put on my rough-weather harness and go out on the plunging bowsprit in 20-foot seas. Lin had to suit up in her foul weather gear and harness to help me. The normal five-minute job became a twenty-minute struggle.

Learning to move around on deck properly will save you from many potential dangers. Bob Duke, a husky, 6-foot-plus marine surveyor, told me about the teasing he gets from potential buyers when he moves around slowly and surely on each boat he visits. He always has his hand on a secure hold and says, in his own words, “I probably look like an old lady.” He has never slipped or fallen, though he’s been on hundreds of different boats. But several of Bob’s clients have cooled their own enthusiasm when they rushed along a side deck and tripped overboard. There is nothing silly about crawling along the side deck in rough weather. You should never go forward without a handhold every step, even in moderate weather. Practice moving around on board blindfolded in harbor and you’ll find out where the danger spots are on your boat.

After all of these safety items are worked out and practiced, a rough-weather harness built for you alone should be added to your equipment list. A 2 ½- to 3-inch-wide belt designed so that when it is not taking any strain it rests well below your chest will be more comfortable to wear than many commercial harnesses. When normal working strains come on the safety line, the wide belt should spread the load across the middle of your back and in extreme situations the belt should slide up under your armpits where it belongs. A working line that is only 3 feet long means you can’t move too far from convenient handholds, nor move too quickly from one place to another. So you are forced to remember the basic at-sea safety procedure of planning each step before you make it. The only improvement we might

make to the harnesses we have used for twelve years would be to add a second working line which we could attach to a second point before we released the first hook.

But no matter how carefully designed any rough-weather harness is, it is not an item to be used at all times. It is not a panacea to replace proper equipment and proper training. Nor is it a piece of gear you should come to depend on. There are several reasons we and most other long-term, offshore sailors feel rough-weather harnesses should be relegated to their proper place; i.e., something to be used when you consciously think, “This is a situation that demands one more bit of precaution.” First, in reality almost no one wears a harness at all times. This would mean wearing it while you slept, while you sunbathed, and while you sat in the cockpit steering on a warm sunny day and always having its clip secured to some strong point. This may actually happen on racing boats where the one long voyage of the year can be expected to last five or six days. But on long cruising passages, which last sometimes 20 to 25 days or more, this is an uncomfortable nuisance, so what usually happens is that crew charge out of the companionway to see what is causing all the racket and rush forward to help muzzle a wayward jib or release the offending halyard and don’t stop to think about whether or not they are wearing a harness. If the now harnessless person has not learned *proper hanging-on habits* he/she will be prime material for an unwelcome trip overboard. If these same people have always depended on their harness to act as a third hand, they will not have learned to work with one hand for the ship, the other for themselves.

If you say, “Okay, I’ll use the harness every time I go out of the cockpit in winds over 20 knots,” the harness probably won’t be there for you to grab when a sudden squall hits. So again, only your carefully learned, limpet-like habits will help you stay on the foredeck.

Safety harnesses hinder your movement around the boat and are liable to break under sudden shock loads or due to chafe. This was proven in the sadly disastrous Fastnet Race. Out of 235 crew who said they used their harnesses during this race, 26 reported the harnesses failed. Six lives were lost directly as a result of these failures. Some of the problems were related

to the design and construction of the harnesses. And, during the ensuing years, commercial harnesses have been made stronger and less prone to failure. But, some of the failures had nothing to do with design or construction of the gear. Twenty percent of the reported failures were due to the tether lines chaffing through and ten men reported their harness wrapped around some obstruction when they fell overboard. This kept them from climbing back on board unassisted.¹

Peggy Slater, a well-known and successful west coast US racing skipper, emphasized this problem of getting back on board if you do fall over. She had a frightful experience during a solo passage to Honolulu. When she was washed overboard during a jib change her harness line did keep her attached to the boat, but she found there was no way to get back on board, especially since her windvane kept the boat racing downwind at close to 7 knots and the dragging headsail kept her pinned against the side of the boat while seas washed over her head. In spite of a broken hand, she was able to climb back on board almost eight hours later, saved by her extraordinary strength, determination, and some fortunate circumstances including a surge by the rushing boat that washed her high enough to grab a hold on deck. But after several years of contemplation she concluded, "I've come to feel that if you fall overboard while you are singlehanding, even if you are attached by a harness, you might as well be dead. Provisions to make climbing back on board such as steps on the transom, a windvane release line which will cause the boat to head up into the wind, or handrails along the outside of the boat might help. But no sane person wants to unhook his lifeline snap and let go of a sure thing to chance reaching the stern of the boat when he is wearing all sorts of soaked heavy clothes and is already suffering from the shock of falling overboard."

Even if you choose to wear a harness most of the time, I feel it is important to remind yourself of the note I posted for Lin the first time we headed off to sea. It said, "If you fall overboard, you're dead." We'd just tried out our new windvane and were watching as it magically steered *Seraffyn* to windward almost as well as I could have done myself. It was Lin who commented that she worried that with the vane in control we were

adding to the danger of being alone on deck at night. Without a person on the helm, the boat wouldn't round into the wind and stop. Instead it would carry on as she slept because she probably wouldn't hear my yelling. The captain of a Costa Rican shrimp trawler reinforced this thought when I was hired on as navigator and Lin as cook for a monthlong research excursion. "Men go out at night to use the stern rail. They are sleepy and make a mistake and slip overboard. The helmsman doesn't hear their cries, not with the engine chugging and the bow wake churning."²

Many new cruising people wonder about the problem of keeping their young children safely on board. Some modern cruising boats look like netted playpens containing chained youngsters. I've spoken to the parents of children who grew up on oceangoing yachts before harnesses were billed as the be-all and end-all solution. The Stanilands told how they took three-month-old Ian across the Atlantic, then started teaching him to swim at the age of four months. As soon as he could swim he was given free run of the deck of *Carina* with its 6-inch bulwarks. He fell overboard once while they lay at anchor. His mother stood by and watched. She let him flounder around for a few moments before rescuing him. He never fell overboard again. "That's the way babies learn not to touch hot stoves," Ian's mother told me as she proudly watched 26-year-old Ian sail out of Marsessmet Harbor on Malta, bound on yet another charter. "There are far more dangers in a house on shore—electric cords for young mouths to teeth on, concrete steps to fall down, heavy doors to close on little fingers, trucks and cars passing 50 feet away from the door. Just teaching a child not to fall overboard is easy."

More recently an article in *Cruising World* magazine told of one mother who said, "I decided to tell each child, 'When you can swim completely around the boat, you can sail without a harness except when your father and I use one.'" This challenge proved exciting to each of her four children who came to look on the constant bondage of harness and hook as a sign of babyhood. Each child earned his/her badge of honor before the age of five.³

Harnesses should be considered in proper perspective. They are a piece of gear to be used in rough weather or other taxing situations. Just like sail

ties and reefing gear, they should be kept handy for the times when they are needed. And as with all gear on board, you should consider what can be substituted if the rough-weather harness is not at hand when you need it. A jib sheet will attach you to the boat when a squall builds sudden ferocious seas against a strong tide. A halyard end will provide extra security when you rush from below and have to get that anchor secured now or risk damaging the boat.

But most important of all, please consider the following: No amount of skill, no equipment, and no boat will keep you immune if you don't develop the most important seagoing skill of all: a complete fear of falling overboard. It is amazing to watch people drive cars cavalierly through crowded cities and along high-speed, heavily traveled highways. They are not the least afraid of driving, but every one of them is terrified of falling asleep at the wheel. They know this could mean instant death. People can learn not to doze at the wheel of a moving car and they can learn not to step off the curb in front of a Kenworth truck. They can also learn not to fall off a boat with or without a rough-weather harness.

1 From 1979 Fastnet Race inquiry by Council of the RYA and RORC.

2 The Costa Rican government found a solution to this problem of losing crew overboard. They made a new law placing the responsibility where it traditionally belongs. Any trawler captain who returned with one of his crew missing went to jail immediately for six months. Captains took steps to teach each man the dangers, and the problem disappeared.

3 There is a well-balanced discussion of harnesses for children in *Voyaging with Kids*, by Behan Gifford, Michael Robertson and Sara Dawn Johnson.

17

Priorities for Safe Offshore Voyaging



Written by Larry

We feel the goal of most cruising sailors is the pleasure and excitement of competent passage-making free from accidents and gear failures. These accidents may make exciting sea stories but in truth mar the joy of voyaging. The following checklist is in the order that we believe will eventually lead to this goal. It is based on the premise that self-sufficiency is the law of the sea. Rescue from willing, skilled agencies such as the US Coast Guard or Royal Life Boat Society is not available when you are outside American or English waters. In places like the North Pacific or Indian Ocean, it could take up to five days for a vessel to reach you and offer assistance even with the aid of an EPIRB. That is why we start this list with learning the basics of good sailing. We feel that only after you have considered each of the first five categories carefully should you think about the items in the final category, items which are only for use in the rare, extreme emergency.

I. Learn the basic sailing and boat handling skills. This category is the one most frequently overlooked by prospective cruising sailors. In the excitement of planning and rearranging their lives so they can take off for six months, a year, or more, people seem to look at the time and expense involved in *really* learning to sail as an inconvenience. They are anxious to make their dream become a reality. Stories of people who learned to sail after they set off cruising are full of mistakes, accidents, and even tragedies. The least advertised tragedy is the fear or dislike of sailing that can be instilled in your prospective sailing partners when your lack of skill leads to a few incidents that could have been avoided if you'd spent a little more time out on the water before you set off cruising. We recommend learning in dinghies or small boats because the quick response of simple boats like these will help you learn the basics of sail trim, balance, and maneuvering. Even if you plan to have a very reliable engine on your eventual perfect cruising boat, there could be a time when it fails, due to mechanical or electrical reasons, or because you ended up with a line around the prop. Once you've learned the following skills, you can relegate that auxiliary engine to its proper place. You can look on it as a convenience, not an absolute necessity for safe voyaging.

- a. Learn to sail a dinghy or engineless boat under 20 feet in length confidently before you buy a larger boat.
- b. Learn to hang on and move around the boat without a harness.
- c. Practice setting anchors and sailing away from a dragging anchor.
- d. Learn to reef, furl, or change sails in all conditions.
- e. Go out sailing in squally, strong winds, eventually trying out your skills in a gale if possible.
- f. Sail on as many boats as you can so you choose your own boat with opinions based on experience.

II. Choose a boat designed for safe voyaging. Although every manufacturer who sells boats over 20 feet long will tell you his cruising boat is great for crossing oceans, only your previous sailing experience will help you choose a proper offshore boat. Appearance, interior accommodations, price, and ease of financing should not sway you. If you can't arrange for extensive sea trials before you buy, spend the money to charter a boat like the one you are considering buying. After ten or twelve days of sailing you should be able to judge the most important sailing safety features for yourself. Here is a list of features to keep in mind when selecting your boat:

- a. Size—the number one safety feature. Bigger is not necessarily better. Be sure any one member of your crew can handle your boat singlehanded at sea or in harbor if necessary. Remember the storm anchor necessary for a 40-foot boat can weigh 65 pounds or more.
- b. Comfortable motion in a seaway.
- c. Wide, clear side decks.
- d. Good non-skid on decks and working areas.
- e. Easy-to-work, one-level deck area.
- f. Clear foredeck for working gear and sails. g. No extreme coamings to climb over to get out of the cockpit and onto the deck.
- h. Bulwarks or seriously high toe rails.
- i. Safe place for the cook to work in a seaway.
- j. Two good seaberths, preferably right amidships.

III. Learn cruising skills. This category and the first one require time and patience. Peter Pye said it: “To learn to sail you’ve got to go to sea.” He served his apprenticeship exploring the rivers and estuaries of southern England for three years before he set off across the Atlantic. Although there

is a tremendous amount to be learned from books, only hands-on experience will give you and your crew confidence in your cruising skills.

- a. Learn navigation. Even if you can afford sophisticated electronic gear, for safety's sake learn piloting and coastal navigation using only a compass and paper charts. (I can hear some sailors saying, *I'll just carry an extra chart plotter*. But learning to pilot non-electronically helps you become more comfortable judging distances, recognizing differences in water color, and thinking on your toes—in effect, connecting you more closely with the world outside your yacht.) Then consider learning to use a sextant.
- b. Become aware of what is absolutely vital and realize that everything else is only a convenience or comfort; i.e., you can exist on beans and rice and water, you can sail with only a main and jib, you can sail without an engine, but you cannot sail without a mast.
- c. Learn to inspect all of your own rigging and vital equipment.
- d. Learn to maintain and, if possible, repair every vital item on board.
- e. Learn to maneuver in close quarters, first with your engine, then without your engine. Practice using warps, anchors, and, on small cruisers, a sculling oar.
- f. Take basic first aid courses. Ensure your partner and crew are aware of the location of all first aid and medical supplies. We both took a five-day paramedic course offered by a local university and found, within a week of taking that course, we used the skills gained to assist other people on other boats.

- g. Attempt to instruct your crew in the basics of sailing, simple navigation, and safety procedures so they can take over if you are disabled.
- h. Plan stowage so there are no heavy objects over any bunks, floor boards are secured, and lockers won't open accidentally. No fuel tanks or drums on deck. Think of what might get loose or cause bodily damage in a knock-down situation.
- i. Show everyone on board the danger of falling overboard and proper hanging-on techniques.

IV. Select equipment for safe voyaging.

- a. Sail management. If you have hanked-on jibs, you need a jib downhaul led well aft to muzzle a flogging sail so you can safely go out on the foredeck. If you have furling headsails, ensure you have practiced strategies for containing the sail if the furling line or furler fail.
- b. No low-clewed deck-sweeping jibs that could block your vision when you are heeled in a seaway. Low-cut sails, dodgers, lifeline spray cloths, and doghouses with misty windows can keep you from seeing a ship on a collision course.
- c. Easy-to-use, permanently installed reefing (jiffy, slab, or pennant) with permanently installed reef point ties.
- d. Lifelines which can stand the strains of a 200-pounder hitting them at high speed.
- e. Chest high, at-sea lifelines.
- f. Reversible or spare halyards.
- g. Sufficient handholds and rails.

- h. Boom vang that is easy to set and not only prevents accidental gybes but makes it easy to control planned gybes.
- i. Climb-on-board steps so swimmers or someone who falls overboard can get out of the water easily.
- j. Sea anchor (para-anchor or large drogue that can be used from the bow).
- k. Proper bosun's chair with safety line attached for going aloft even if you have mast steps
- l. Selection of extra heavy ground tackle.
- m. Hand-operated or electric anchor winch to save your back from damage and make warping easier.
- n. A tender capable of carrying the full crew ashore in fresh winds.

V. Carry proper do-it-yourself safety equipment.

- a. Strobe lights
- b. Signal torch
- c. Radar reflectors
- d. Freon horn and refills
- e. Backup LED battery operated lights that can be used as running and steaming lights if necessary
- f. Medical kit
- g. Repair materials and spares for vital equipment, i.e., for sails, rigging, and rudder
- h. Jury-rig plan
- i. Efficient bilge pump, not only one run off your engine, but a powerful hand-operated pump for times when the battery may be down or the engine may not start
- j. Emergency hull-repairing plan and materials

- k. At least 1,000 feet of warping and mooring lines
- l. Spare anchors
- m. Fire extinguishers
- n. Emergency reverse-osmosis manual watermaker
- o. Man-overboard pole and ring
- p. Rough-weather harness.
- q. VHF or single-sideband (SSB) radio transmitter
- r. Handheld VHF

VI. Optional emergency equipment. We've had the opportunity to spend time with some of today's best-known offshore cruising sailors—the Smeetons, the Guzzwells, the Hiscocks, and Peer (Peter) Tangvald and in more recent times folks like Beth Leonard, John Kretschmer, Alvah Simon, and Gary (Cap'n Fatty) Goodlander. All of them seem to agree: the object of cruising is being self-sufficient. We go to sea for pleasure, not for commerce. Therefore if we must call for outside help, we've in some small way lost the game. If you adopt this attitude before you set off cruising and if you can honestly say to yourself that you have considered and acted on each of the previously listed items, it is *highly unlikely* that you will ever need the last emergency items on this list:

- a. EPIRB
- b. Separate CO₂-activated liferaft



SECTION VI

Details That Can Make Your Yacht More Efficient, Simpler, and Easier to Maintain

We once had a boisterous discussion with a seasoned boat builder and a young designer. The subject of the debate was a 30-foot cruising cutter; the plans were spread across the floor. While the boat builder talked of appearance, ease of construction, and types of wood, the designer talked of balance and performance in a running sea. We leaned in and examined the plans. Things got heated when Larry inquired into fairlead placement, rudder shaft accessibility, working room near the mast, and butane storage. The designer grew increasingly agitated with every question Larry asked, until he finally turned to us and said, “Larry, the overall concept is what matters. The details aren’t so important.”

To this day we both disagree with him. Details are what make any acceptable sailboat into a cruising yacht. Join a gathering of offshore voyagers and the conversation will consist of tidbits about details, from how someone’s new galley pump works to a show-and-tell of a new type of shackle.

From stem to stern a cruising yacht is a mass of details. The more attention you pay to simplifying each one, the better your cruising will be.

18

Rudders for Cruising



Written by Larry

Yacht designers and builders quite often forget how important “repairability” is when they design and build rudders. Sure the rudder will steer the boat when you put the helm up or down, but what about the nuts and bolts of maintaining and repairing the rudder, the stern bearing, the shaft, or your boat’s propeller? The location and construction details of a rudder can make various interrelated repair and maintenance jobs either simple or a hassle.

A friend of mine bought a yacht in southern Spain. It had a loose stern bearing. We planned to haul the boat, paint the bottom, replace the rubber stern bearing and be off in three or four days to cruise in company. But the rudder location beat us. The shaft and stern tube had to be replaced due to excessive wear. The rudder’s skeg was located aft of and in line with the propeller shaft. So it was impossible to pull the shaft aft (see [Photo 18.4](#)). We had to completely unbolt the engine and pull it forward into the main saloon in order to take the shaft and tube out. We spent three extra days of labor, slip charges, and frustration doing what should have been a two-hour job. We lost three irreplaceable days of cruising in the Balearic Islands for the lack of built-in repairability.

Here is a photo discussion of various rudders. The photos were taken in the Malta Yacht Yard where over three hundred cruising yachts were dry stored for the winter. Compare these photos to the rudder on your dream cruiser for simple repairability.

The large hole in the rudder ([Photo 18.1](#)) is for easy propeller shaft removal. (Note small holes in the trailing edge of the rudder for emergency steering lines.)

A similar arrangement in [18.2](#) allows the propeller shaft to be removed without the hassle of unbolting and moving the engine forward. But in spite of the hole through the skeg, the rudder must still be removed to get the shaft out.

[Photo 18.3](#) is a study of built-in maintenance problems. Unlike the arrangements in numbers [18.1](#) and [18.2](#), here it is necessary to remove the rudder before removing the propeller, or shaft, or before servicing the stern bearing because the rudder shaft is too close to the end of the propeller shaft. This rudder installation was on an amateur-built boat.

[Photo 18.4](#) shows a modern fin-and-skeg yacht. There is enough room between the shaft and skeg to remove the propeller and service the stern bearing. But if the shaft has to come out, the only way is to move the engine forward. A hole such as in [18.2](#) would allow the shaft to be pulled aft once the rudder was removed, but the hole could weaken the skeg.

[Photo 18.5](#) shows a practical outboard rudder that can be lifted off its pintles in minutes. The shaft, stern bearing, and propeller can be pulled aft without removing the rudder because of the cut-out in the leading edge of the rudder. Having the propeller in an aperture makes fouling lines less likely.

[Photo 18.6](#) is its own story. Try this on a concrete shipway! A travel lift will facilitate this painful extraction, but few primitive shipyards in far-off cruising areas have such sophisticated, costly equipment.

The older yacht in [18.7](#) has a wooden rudder shaft, and if this were my boat I would be keen to inspect the shaft alley and rudder stock regularly for worms. But I would guess it is rarely removed for inspection as the rudder needs about 4 feet of clearance under the keel before it will drop out. If you

are considering buying a boat like this, make sure the surveyor removes the rudder to inspect the shaft alley and rudder stock. (A copper or plastic tube in the shaft alley and copper sheet, tacked behind the creosote-painted stern post, will eliminate worm worry.)

With the steel yacht in [18.8](#) we have the reverse logistical problem. The propeller and shaft have to be removed first to allow the rudder to be dropped out of the hull. The rudder is also at the same level as the after part of the keel. A grounding on a hard bottom could damage the rudder shaft and cause it to bind. For safety, all rudders should be at least 3 inches higher than the bottom of the keel.

[Photo 18.9](#) shows an inboard rudder on a motorsailer that can be removed without digging a hole. The four bolts at the rudder-to-shaft coupling can be unbolted. The shaft is then eased up into the hull enough for the rudder to lift out of the heel fitting, or as in [18.10](#) the heel fitting is unbolted from the aft part of the keel.



Photo 18.1



Photo 18.2

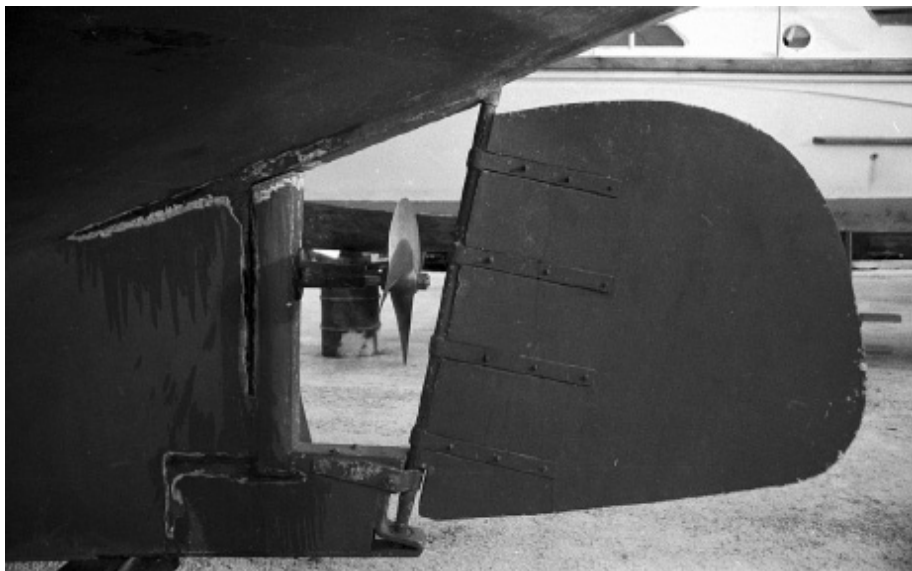


Photo 18.3



Photo 18.4



Photo 18.5



Photo 18.6



Photo 18.7



Photo 18.8



Photo 18.9



Photo 18.10



Photo 18.11



Photo 18.12

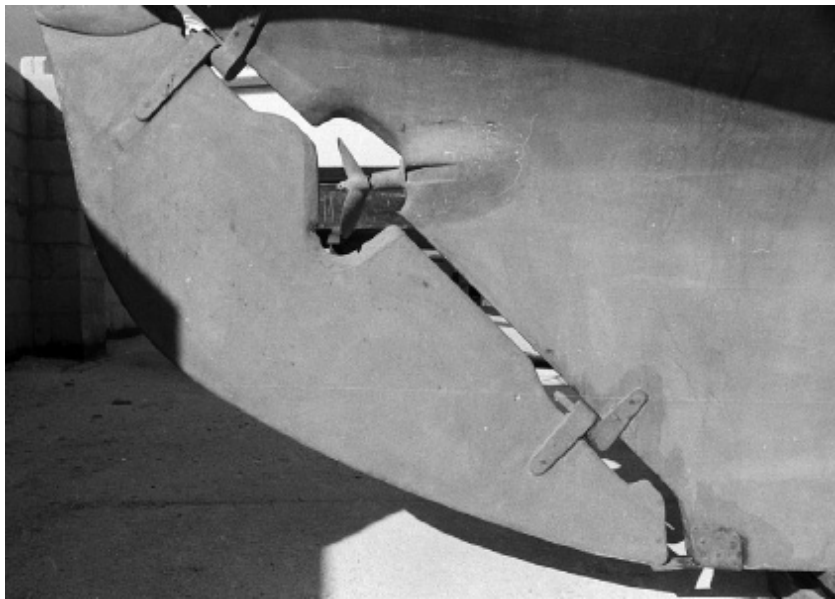


Photo 18.13



Photo 18.14



Photo 18.15

The rudder on the steel yacht in [18.11](#) has a good grounding clearance. This, with the removal coupling on the rudder shaft, makes a very practical inboard installation. Also of interest is the fact that this rudder is hollow and filled with used engine oil to reduce internal corrosion.

In [18.12](#) we see an easy-to-remove-and-service outboard rudder. But the wooden stern post on this boat is too close to the propeller shaft. To remove the stern bearing or propeller, the owner will have to shift the engine forward.

This rudder in [18.13](#) has a small heel fitting added later to discourage fouling warps, lobster pot lines, and anchor chains. Without this fitting you could end up anchored by your rudder. Note, too, the water path for the rudder prop shaft bearing.

The boat in [18.14](#), like most shoal draught vessels, has a problem getting the rudder deep enough for rudder control. On boats such as this, small skegs on the hulls, built lower than the rudders, would stop damage when taking the ground. It would also help prevent fouling lines.

With an outboard rudder such as pictured in [18.15](#), simple, cheap, owner-built self-steering gear can be fitted. This rudder also has pre-stretched Dacron (Terylene) line stops. If you lash the tiller with stretchy nylon line when you are hove-to in heavy seas, the rudder is controlled by the combined efforts of the tiller lashing and Dacron stops and kept from being jammed hard over. Otherwise it is possible you could shear the pintles from the stern post. External rudder stops are rarely rigged on inboard rudders because of the extra drag they create.

I would not consider anything but an outboard rudder on my own cruising sailboat, not only for ease of removal, inspection, and repair, but also for the final bonus of being able to have the simplest-to-install type of effective self-steering gear.

I hope this photo discussion will give you some ideas for modifying your existing rudder. Or if you are planning a new yacht, maybe it will help you design a rudder with built in “repairability.”

19

Plumbing Ideas



Written by Larry

This chapter is just a collection of thoughts and ideas that come to mind when we consider the problems of keeping a cruising boat comfortable and properly maintained. Each of the ideas will be listed in my order of preference, starting with the simplest way to plumb and leading up to the more complicated.

Anyone who has cruised for a long time is aware of the almost fanatical search for the mythical hot shower. Yachtsmen go to great lengths to get what they take for granted in a shoreside home. If you can have your own bathing facilities on board, you'll be free to choose whether or not you want to stay in a marina or at a yacht club. If you can devise a simple, neat way to have a hot bath without using a ton of fresh water, your floating home will be more comfortable and more self-contained.

In warm climates a deck shower can be easily rigged. On *Seraffyn* we used a 5-gallon black plastic jerry jug. If this jug was left out in the sun for a few hours, it provided a warm or even hot shower. We would take our

showers just before sunset and if the water in the jug wasn't warm enough, a transfusion from the kettle would sort it out. We lifted the jug onto our spinnaker pole fitting, then used a siphon hose with a simple swing valve to start and stop the water flow. Five gallons of warm water would give us both a luxurious hair shampoo and shower. If the anchorage was crowded we would wear bathing suits and scrub ourselves under the suits. If water was limited, both of us could shower and shampoo using half that amount or 2.5 gallons. If we were really watching our fresh-water supplies, we could both wash first in salt water then rinse with 2 quarts of fresh water. This is the simplest possible shower system and will work on any size boat if the weather is warm. If the weather is cool and your boat is too small for a built-in shower, inside baths must be done the hard way—with a basin and wash cloths. This is not our first choice, but it does work. A 5-gallon bucket set on the floor between the settees worked as a shampoo basin during our 49-day, 45-degree North Pacific crossing.

On a boat larger than 29 feet, a sit-down tub with a hand-pressurized shower tank would be my first choice. This is the system we chose and came to really appreciate on board *Taleisin*.¹ On colder days, water could be heated on the stove and added to the pressure tank to achieve a comfortable temperature. This system is almost foolproof. You have no pipes or hoses to clutter the bilges or leak. The water is heated simply and cheaply. The separate pressure tank automatically meters the water each person uses. This pressure tank could also be used in a standard toilet and shower arrangement, but I prefer the sit-down shower tub because it contains the spray so you don't have to wipe down the whole head after each shower when you feel clean and are looking forward to going out for dinner. More important, sitting in a tub is less dangerous in a seaway than standing in a shower.

Hot water for a shower can also be produced with coils running through a diesel or solid fuel stove, or by circulating your engine's cooling water through a hot-water heater. This system works quite well but is space-consuming and means pipes in the bilges. This system can also be quite

expensive and, worst of all, means you have to run the engine in harbor just to have a hot shower.

There are also “demand” propane water heaters which work well. (“Demand” means that it activates when the hot-water tap is opened.) They must be vented well and have a pilot light which flares when the water is turned on. But these devices worry me. I would rather heat the kettle on the stove than be concerned about explosions or carbon monoxide/ dioxide poisoning.

The most complicated way to produce a hot shower is electrically, with an auxiliary 220-volt generator producing current to operate a household-type electric water heater. This system is common on large motorsailers or motorboats with sophisticated engine rooms. Once again, the noise caused by running the generator could irritate your neighbors, the pipes and wires will clutter your bilge, and water consumption will be hard to meter.

Water transfer from your tanks to your drinking glass can be achieved in various ways. The simplest is the system we saw on a tiny globe-girdling trimaran, *No Name*. Her crew carried twenty 1-gallon jugs of water and took out one jug a day, set it on the counter, and poured when necessary. Only slightly more complicated but hundreds of times more convenient is the gravity tank system. This is a small version of most cities’ water systems which usually have a reservoir or large tank above the town. The tank drains down to various facilities. On a yacht this tank can be small (8 or 10 gallons). It can be installed on deck in an unused corner, inside the corner of the deck house or even in the flattish triangular space above the chain locker. This tank can go anywhere as long as it is above the valves in your system. It is backed up by other tanks under bunks or in the bilge which are used as spare water storage. This may sound inconvenient since it means transferring water by hand from storage tanks to gravity tank. But it is only during long passages that you have to transfer water, and then this system forces you to be aware of how much water you are consuming. In harbor or when you are coasting, your day tank can be topped up directly from shoreside facilities.

The next choice and the one most common among cruising sailors are foot- or hand-operated pumps. These are easier to install than gravity feed systems, but the pumps used on live-aboard yachts wear out surprisingly fast and require a supply of spare parts plus regular rebuilding.

The electrical demand pressure systems are my least favorite choice. They are reliant on battery power. If anything in the electrical power chain fails, you can't get water unless you have a hand pump backup. Electrical systems are usually bilge cluttering and a source of breakdowns. These systems have been known to develop leaks and pump all of the precious water supply into the bilge, and, finally, few things are more irritating than sitting below and hearing the noise of the pressure pump frittering away your diminishing water supply while some guest or crewman takes a leisurely shower or lets the water run while he brushes his teeth. On the more positive side, an electrical pressure system is convenient to use and can have pressure similar to that found in a shoreside home. If water and electricity are available in unlimited supply, this system works fine. But for some reason, no matter how careful the crew, water seems to evaporate on boats with a demand pressure system. So if you have one, isolate one tank for emergency water supplies.

If you are regularly tied alongside a dock with fresh water supplies nearby, there is one more way to achieve pressure water. Simply plumb the shoreside water hose into your system. This can be done by using a pressure-restricting valve so you don't over-pressurize and blow up your water system. A gravity water system can also be pressurized for those times you spend alongside the dock by isolating the day tank and only pressurizing the pipes. If you use a dockside hose to pressurize your system, remember to turn off the hose whenever you leave the boat. A leak in the system could sink your floating home.

Conserve fresh water with a salt water tap in the galley. The easiest way to do this is with a garden variety tap plumbed as directly as possible to a through-hull fitting and valve that is as far away as possible from your sink and head discharges. Attach this tap to a bulkhead below the waterline close to the sink. When you can use salt water for such tasks as boiling eggs or

washing dishes just put a pot under the tap and turn it on. This below-the-waterline tap has another bonus use. You can wash out your bilge with it. Attach a garden hose to the threaded tap and you have salt water pressurized up to the level of your waterline. A final rinse with fresh water can be done using a hose from your gravity feed tank.

Our second choice for a salt water tap would be a foot- or hand-operated pump in the galley. The salt water pump is used much less than the fresh water ones so it is not likely to wear out as fast. We prefer foot-operated galley pumps, as this way you have both hands free to work or hang on.

Another plumbing option for the galley is hot salt water pumped directly into the sink or even the bathtub. This is achieved whenever the engine is running. Hot water from the heat exchanger or exhaust manifold is routed overboard via the sink. If you have to run your engine to cool your iceboxes or charge batteries, this engine time can serve double by producing plenty of hot salt water to make scrubbing that pile of dirty dishes easier. It will also conserve fresh water.

The simplest type of sink you can have on a boat is a plastic or stainless steel bowl that you empty directly overboard. (Remember to check for silverware.) But most cruising boats, even the tiniest ones, now have self-draining, fixed sinks. Our choice for a 30-foot cruising boat would be two deep sinks as close as possible to the centerline of the boat. This way the sinks would drain well on either tack. If your sink backs up when you are heeled, it is best to have a swing-type shut-off valve right under the sink. This is more convenient to use than the through-hull fitting in the bilge. A clear plastic hose for the sink drain is handy when you have to clear the stoppages that are inevitable in a galley sink drain.²

Some yachts have drains which let the shower and icebox water go directly into the bilge. This is a smelly practice and should never be allowed in a wooden boat as the fresh dirty water in the bilge could encourage bacteria and eventually cause rot. The installation of a sump tank can be simplified if you use your bilge pump to clear this tank also. Just install a

two-way valve near the pump. This valve switches the suction line on your pump from the bilge to the shower or icebox sump.

All of the hoses you use on board should be clamped to the through-hull fittings with stainless steel clamps. Check this with a magnet even if the clamps you buy come off a shelf labeled “stainless steel.” Often the bands are stainless but the screws are iron. A magnet will not be attracted strongly by good quality stainless steel hose clamps. If any hose could possibly be kicked or hit by items stored near it, double up the hose clamps and, if necessary, use steam hose for extra strength. Inspect the fittings the hose slips onto. Make sure it has a proper boss or raised section so the hose can’t slide off by itself. Proper swing-type seacocks have this boss plus a flat flange which can be bolted through the hull and backed up with a wood pad. This pad strengthens and stiffens the hull around the through-hull hole. Remember, seacocks and hoses below or near the waterline should be as reliable as the hull itself. Carefully, research each fitting’s quality, strength, and method of installation. Almost all floodings and sinkings in harbor are due to poor hoses, poor clamps, or cheap through-hull fittings (often only gate valves). Please don’t try to save money here. Use only the finest quality.

Bilge pumps are supposed to pump the water out. But one night we came home to *Seraffyn* to find the floorboards floating. The bilge pump overboard hose was looped above the waterline and exited underwater at a through-hull. Somehow it had started to siphon water back through the pump into the boat. Maybe a passing fishing boat’s wake had given it the needed push; we’ll never know. If we hadn’t lived on board, *Seraffyn* could have sunk right at her mooring. I had installed a marine check valve at the top of the loop on the overboard hose, but this had frozen shut because we used our bilge pump so rarely. The check valve is vital in any bilge pump or toilet overboard hose. The check valve lets air into the hose above the waterline and stops water from siphoning back into the boat. When you pump the bilge or head, you should be able to hear this valve sucking air on the back stroke. This means it is working properly. After that incident we began listening for this sound each time we used the bilge pump, and we

closed the seacock when we left the boat for more than a few hours, just to be sure. You should do the same for the check valve on your toilet salt water intake hose.

Effective, carefully installed plumbing alternatives can save you time, money, and aggravation. They'll also eliminate most of the piping in your bilge. An empty bilge is easier to clean. But more important, an uncluttered bilge is a space ideally suited for your shipboard wine cellar.

1 The sit-down, tub-type shower described here has worked wonderfully on *Taleisin*. Our tub is under the companionway where an engine might be on other boats. The pump-up sprayer (a plastic 3-gallon insecticide sprayer with a demand-type shower head in place of the spray head) is right next to the tub, concealed in a locker. During 35 years of voyaging on *Taleisin*, we rarely felt like looking for showers on shore. It was always been easier to shower on board. (See *The Care and Feeding of Sailing Crew*, 2nd edition, for more ideas on keeping clean afloat.)

2 To avoid galley sink drain clog-ups, the owner of the boat I (Lin) currently voyage on has found a plastic washbasin that fits snugly into the sink. There is a strainer kept nearby. All washing up water goes into the basin which is then strained before being released down the drain. A slight nuisance, but far less hassle than clearing a clogged hose.

20

The Cruising Mainsail



Written by Larry

To add to your feeling of self-sufficiency, you should analyze each piece of gear on board, including your mainsail. Is the mainsail easy to reef, furl and set? Is it efficient to windward? Will it be easy to repair and maintain in primitive countries? Is it, above all, strongly constructed?

I used a standard mainsail with headboard, roach, and battens for our first four years of cruising on *Seraffyn* and got tired of replacing battens, stitching, and repairing batten pockets. I also hated having to disturb Lin at night to set or reef the mainsail. I realized that if I could eliminate the battens and headboard, the windvane could be left in charge while one person reefed or unreefed the mainsail no matter if we were going to windward, reaching or running. With no battens or headboard to foul the shrouds, it wouldn't be necessary to head into the wind to raise or lower the sail.

I discussed my mainsail problems with Paul Lees of Crusader Sails in Poole, England. He confirmed that battens, large roach, and headboard were developed to give a boat the maximum amount of sail area under various

racing rules, and since until recently purely cruising boats were not too common, a cruiser got a racing mainsail whether he intended to race or not. Paul said he could cut our new mainsail like a genoa, without battens or roach. He went on to say that a leech line would be necessary, as even careful cutting and stable cloth could not prevent curling and fluttering as the fabric aged.

I also spoke to *Seraffyn*'s designer, Lyle Hess. Lyle felt that the roach area would not be missed going to windward and would only slightly affect *Seraffyn* on a reach or downwind. I took all of this information into account and chose the simplified mainsail since it wouldn't affect our ability to beat off a lee shore.



We sailed with a battonless mainsail for 8 years on board *Seraffyn* and for almost 30 on *Taleisin*. I loved it, especially as we did not have to head into the wind to take it down, even in very strong following winds.

Battens are generally a nuisance on a cruising boat. Their pockets chafe badly on the inboard ends, splitting the pocket stitching and tearing the sail if they happen to break at night. Sailing in light winds with a leftover choppy sea, a mainsail can make the most agonizing slatting and banging noises, even if it is prevented and vangged well. By eliminating the weight of battens on the leech of the sail, the strain and wear of slatting can be greatly reduced. About half of your mainsail repairs will be eliminated when you get rid of battens; ask any sailmaker.

The twist of the headboard can cause your halyard to chafe on the sheave box and possibly derail and jam when running downwind. By eliminating the headboard you eliminate this problem and have the bonus of one less thing to foul the shrouds. A headboard mainsail is simply built like a genoa or boom staysail ([Figures 20.1](#) and [20.2](#)).

Now someone will say that removing the roach area will give the vessel lee helm. If any helm does develop, it can be relieved by raking the mast slightly aft to restore the proper balance. Most of the newer boats I have sailed on suffer from weather helm, so possibly a roachless main can be an improvement.

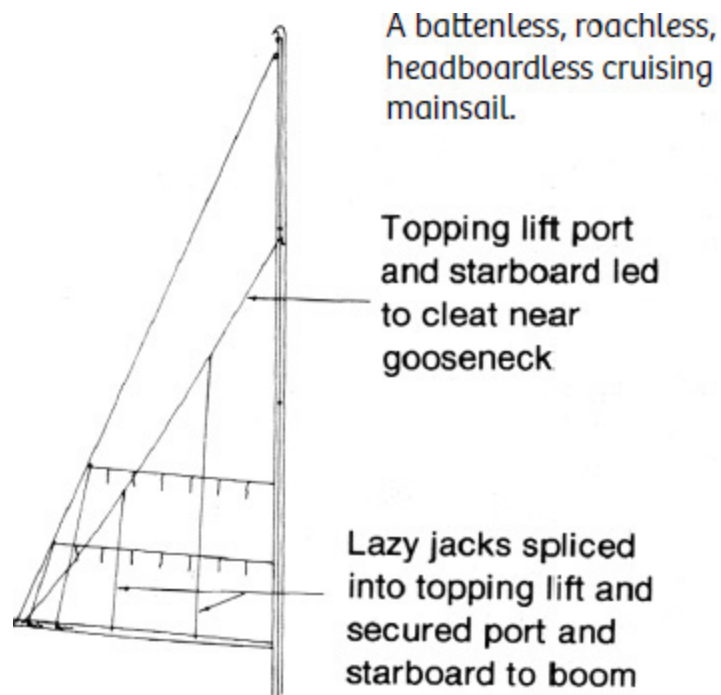


Figure 20.1

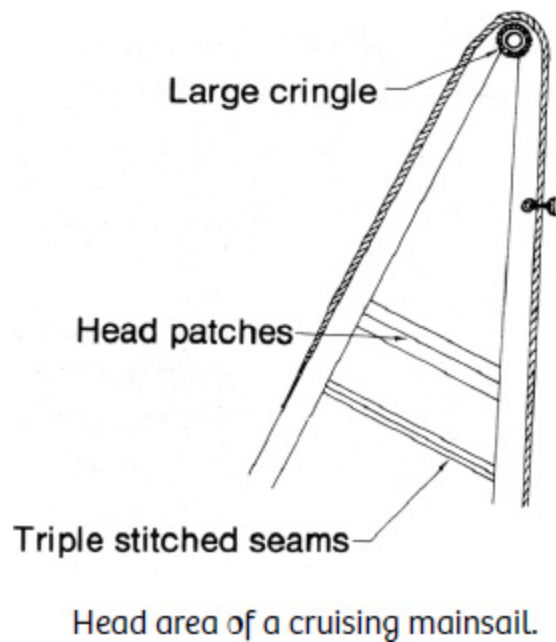


Figure 20.2

If you want a new mainsail, speak nicely to your local sailmaker about eliminating roach, battens, batten pockets, and headboard. They represent

considerable labor and extra material. He could probably use this saving to triple-stitch each seam for no extra cost. Most sailors agree that panel stitching failure due to chafe is an extremely common sail problem. Using three rows of stitching will give you 50 percent more resistance to chafe and more threads to rub through ([Figure 20.3](#)).

While on the subject of chafe, a problem that besets most mainsails, may I mention that I have found ways of eliminating it. Clear plastic tubing, fitting over all shrouds where the mainsail touches, gives a non-chafing smooth surface. Then, when running or broad reaching, I use a preventer vang tackle with nylon line to secure the boom firmly. This stops the mainsail and boom from pumping up and down against the shrouds; hence, no chafe.

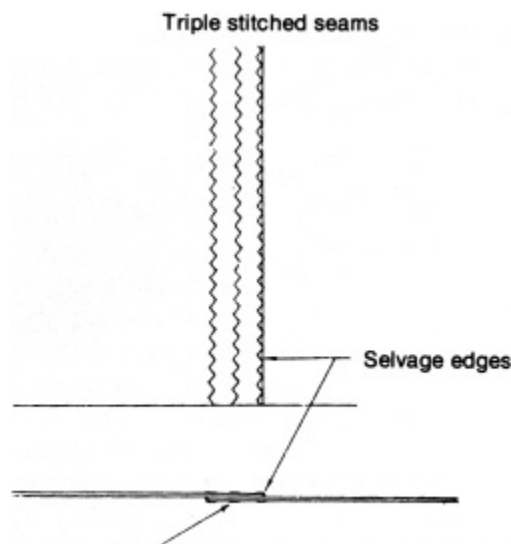


Figure 20.3 Triple-stitched seams.

The center row of stitching is well away from the selvage edges and therefore has full holding power on both layers of cloth. This prevents any distortion such as may happen near the cloth edge.

My preferred downwind rig over all the years I voyaged on *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin* is main and headsail wing and wing, with windvane steering. I attended to these anti-chafe details and each of our mainsails tended to last

seven to ten years. No extra gear such as twin staysails have been necessary just for dead downwind sailing.

Regarding triple-stitching, Dacron or Terylene sailcloth is very stable; therefore, most loss of sail shape is due to relatively weak panel stitching. Triple-stitching will stabilize your sail panels and your sail will hold its shape much longer ([Figure 20.3](#)).

While on the subject of cruising mainsails, one cannot ignore reef points and pennants (slab reefing) with lazy jacks for the following reasons:

1. No expensive or complicated geared mechanism is necessary.
2. If the tack and clew patches for each set of reef points are strongly sewn in, you can reef without immediately tying in the reef ties. In squally weather this is very convenient. As soon as the squall is passed, you can quickly re-hoist the sail by just releasing the pennants and winching up the halyard. If lazy jacks ([Figure 20.1](#)) are used, they will contain the foot of the reefed sail and, when or if the reef points are to be tied, will contain the loose area at the foot of the sail, making the knots easier to tie.
3. If your sail is badly damaged along the foot or lower panels, the upper portion is still useable with a reef tied in.
4. When using a reef, one can control sail shape by loosening or tightening reef ties or clew and tack pennants.
5. When roller-reefed (in-boom reefing or around-the-boom reefing), the leech and luff of the sail take most of the sailing strain, causing premature stretching and leech flutter.
6. The extra cost of having reef points sewn into your new mainsail will, in a new boat, be offset by not having to purchase furling gear, which can be quite expensive.

If at all possible for cruising, one should have handsewn rings everywhere, though this does increase the cost of the sail. These handsewn cringles are more secure and spread their load over a wider area of the sail. On sails with punched grommets, I have taken the time to sew each luff and foot grommet as shown ([Figure 20.4](#)). Large handsewn rings accept jury-

rig-type repairs much easier than do the hydraulically pressed rings used on many racing sails.

I'm sure my triple-stitched, battenless, roachless, and headboardless mainsail will be stronger and last longer, and will definitely be easier to use than a misplaced racing main.

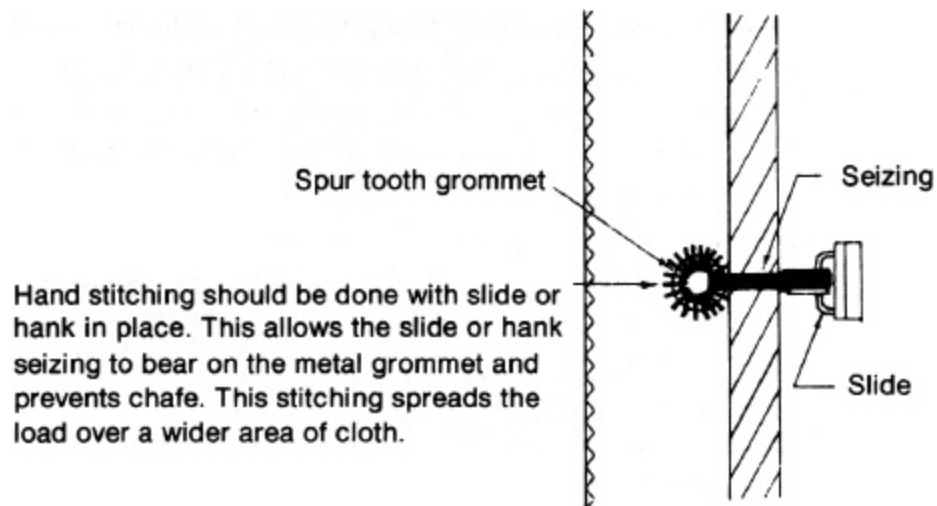


Figure 20.4 Sewing in a spur-tooth grommet.

21

The Instant Whisker-Spinnaker Pole

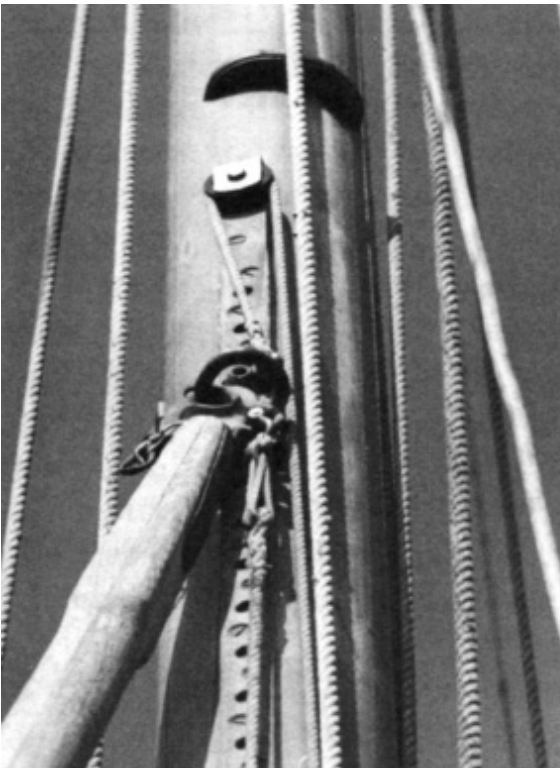


When you're 4 foot 10 and slightly uncoordinated, gybing a sail set on a 16-foot whisker pole in a lumpy sea at night becomes a dilemma. "Should I wake him up?" "Maybe this wind will shift back soon; maybe I'll just sail by the lee until the change of watch." On days when I felt like going sailing alone, getting that formidable pole off its chocks on the bowsprit, hoisting it onto its mast front ring, then rigging up its uphaul, hoisting its outboard end, and pulling the genoa across was more than I really cared to do. So I sometimes ran along with the genoa cracking and slatting behind the blanketing mainsail.

After seven years of cruising on *Seraffyn*, Larry finally got tired of having to help me set or take down the pole almost every time we used it. He decided to copy Dan Bowen, an English sailor we'd met on a 30-foot sloop called *Romadi*. Dan had used what he called his "instant pole." I must admit I fought Larry with my usual conservative attitude. "What if it doesn't work? We'll have ruined our beautiful varnished mast. What about windage?" But Larry had actually been sailing on *Romadi*. He knew some facts I only came to believe after I used our own instant whisker pole for one day. I finally got

it—even if then I became a little perturbed that Larry had waited two years from when he met and sailed with Dan until the day he gave me the wonderful sailing freedom of an instant pole.

In order to change over to an instant pole, you'll need strong, external genoa slide-type track up the center front of your mast extending from a point 4 feet above the deck to a height that is 2 feet longer than your whisker-spinnaker pole when its end is sitting on deck. In our case we already had 4 feet of 1½-inch wide bronze track on the mast for normal spinnaker use. So we had to add nine feet more. We couldn't buy an identical track so we made our own from flat bronze bar stock $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch thick and 1¼ inches wide which Larry placed on a teak riser. Since this track will take a lot of torque pressure when it is in use, Larry secured it in place with a 1½-inch No. 14 bronze wood screw staggered every four inches. If you have an aluminum spar, use a track section that is as strong as that normally used for the spinnaker pole track on a racing boat of your size.



Left: The upper end *Seraffyn's* pole showing the uphaul, downhaul block. Note how the pole end clips upward from underneath the ring. This keeps the pole from twisting and

jamming. Right: To save weight aloft we cast a special fitting for the upper end of *Taleisin's* pole.

At the top end of the track, Larry fastened a small cheek block. Three feet below the track he put two small fairleads for ¼-inch line. Our pole has a clip-type end fitting which attaches to a normal spinnaker pole car. After adding the track, block, and fairleads, we used the same pole and fittings but attached a ¼-inch line to the bottom of the slider and ran it through the fairleads, up the front of the mast, through the block, and back to the top edge of the slider where it was lashed snugly with the use of a lanyard—sort of like an endless clothesline.

When you pull on one side of this line, the inboard end of the pole slides up the mast. Pull on the other side and the pole comes down. Now to make this simple uphaul/downhaul into a bit of magic, secure your staysail halyard to the outboard end fitting of your pole. Adjust your halyard so that when the pole has its inboard end a foot from the top of the track, the other end clears the deck by at least a foot. Now swing the pole end over your lifelines, haul on the pole downhaul and watch it swing right into place. If you don't have a staysail halyard, use your jib halyard to test the pole before you install a spinnaker-pole topping-lift block a few feet above the upper end of the whisker pole track. Pre-stretched Dacron line is perfect for the halyard. We did eventually install a separate topping lift when we started to race *Seraffyn* and found we needed to set the staysail at the same time as our pole was in use. But we sailed with the staysail halyard as the topping lift for three years and 17,000 miles before doing this.



Fairleads for the lower end of the hauling line.

Once the pole had its topping lift length determined, Larry swung its lower end over until it touched the forward shroud. He marked that spot and lashed a ½-inch rope thimble both port and starboard. When we are finished using the pole we just snap it into whichever ring is closest. This leaves the deck completely clear of obstacles. Since the pole is almost in line with the lower shroud, it doesn't interfere with fore-and-aft traffic. And it's ready right at hand when it's time to use it. We found the pole end a good place to store the staysail halyard when it wasn't in use.



Instead of a clevis pin, I used eyebolts to connect the forward-lower shrouds to the chainplates. This gave us a place to clip the lower end of the spinnaker pole on either tack.

Now setting the pole or gybing is so simple we'll often use it just for the short run down the harbor. All you do is walk forward, unclip the pole from its shroud ring, put the proper jib sheet in the clip, swing the end of the pole clear of the lifelines, and pull the downhaul line. Then stroll aft and sheet in the jib.¹

For a gybe, let the windward sheet go, walk forward, and pull the pole uphaul. The pole will swing down to where you can reach its lower end. Unclip the jib sheet, guide the pole across the foredeck and clip it to the leeward sheet. Pull the pole downhaul and go aft to sheet in. Then take the mainsail across at your leisure.

There are many advantages to this system—advantages that a woman of my small size really appreciates. You never have to handle the weight of the pole. It never has two ends free at the same time. And because of the friction of the running uphaul/downhaul line, it has never slid up or down the mast by itself.



These three photos show the sequence for setting our instant whisker pole.

There are only four small ways this system can give you trouble. First, if the track or slider are sticky, hauling the pole up and down will be difficult.

We use a shot of silicon lubricant on the slider or track when this happens. Second, if there is any tension on the jib sheet, the pole will be almost impossible to set or lower. When you cast off the windward jib sheet and go forward to lower the pole, you'll learn just how many wraps on the sheet winch keep the sail from going forward and wrapping around the headstay but still keep the tension off the end of the pole. Third, you must watch the pole as you haul on the uphaul line and it swings down toward you. Ninety-nine times out of one hundred the pole will come to rest against the lifelines, but the one time it doesn't because it sneaks down along the headstay where the lifelines dip, it could give you a nasty thump if you aren't watching. Finally, you must be sure the topping lift is led properly when you gybe. If you accidentally twist the pole so the topping lift turns around the pole's outer end, it may go up fine but the inner end can turn on its ring and jam aloft. If the wind is strong and you pull hard to try and force the slider down when it is twisted like this, the leverage could bend your track. The pole did jam in this way, once to each of us in separate incidents. Then we relearned the lesson about what should be done every time we handle a piece of sailing gear: check the leads and make sure they run clear and fair before you pull anything aloft.



In light winds, we do not worry about having a vang on the pole, as the weight of the pole is sufficient to steady the sail out. But to steady the pole out when the wind and sea get up, we will add a vang, securing it to the lower ring of the pole end and running it down to our windlass.

All of the maneuvers I'm describing are planned for one person on watch with a windvane steering. This is where the instant pole really shines. But with two people it's just as beneficial—and easy.

Windage aloft is a problem for someone who both races and cruises and it's one disadvantage of the instant pole. We've eliminated much of the windage associated with cruising boats by using plastic-covered shrouds instead of baggy-wrinkly, so we're willing to give up the $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 percent efficiency lost when going to windward. On the other hand, we've made sure the pole can be easily lowered and removed so we can lash it on deck in case of an ultimate storm. If we had to ride out a hurricane in a tight anchorage, we'd want every bit of windage off the mast and deck including bagged sails, the instant pole, and even the spare halyards. On the other hand, we had *Seraffyn's* pole stored on its lifeline holder and track through a 75-knot-

plus typhoon in the Bay of Bengal, plus four gales and two storms in the North China Sea and North Pacific. It was never a nuisance, nor was the instant pole on *Taleisin* anything but a positive addition.

I came to enjoy downwind sailing twice as much once we had that instant pole arrangement. Even when we decided to build *Taleisin*, *Seraffyn*'s bigger sister, and I realized the spinnaker pole on her would be 20 foot long, I wasn't concerned. I knew I could handle it. Through the years Larry joked that I handled that pole like Mighty Mouse. In a way he called it right. This simple upgrade to our sail-handling systems definitely made me feel more confident and far more powerful. It was one of the gear upgrades that added the most to my feeling of self-sufficiency and security.

1 The video program, Get Ready to Cruise (vimeo.com/ondemand/getreadytocruise), includes a demonstration of how to set and use this instant spinnaker-pole arrangement.

The Truth about Windvanes



Written by Larry

During our years of cruising, I have talked to a lot of sailors who have had difficulties with their windvanes. I have also experienced the technical problems of building, fitting, and using my own gear, so I'd like to share some practical ideas to make your vane more successful.

To fit an efficient vane you first have to look at your boat's balance. Then you have to consider the problems of customizing a vane to your own yacht. You have to understand the limitations of vanes, and finally you have to learn the practical tricks you can use to improve their performance.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCING YOUR BOAT

The very first, most important step before you buy, design, or build anything is to get your boat well balanced.

If she carries excessive weather or lee helm even the best-designed vane gear will not steer well. In medium winds (10 to 15 knots), you should be able to trim your boat out so that you can hold the tiller easily with your thumb and forefinger only and not get arm strain. If you use a wheel, you

should be able to hold her on course with less than two spokes of helm; i.e., your wheel should be turned less than $\frac{1}{8}$ th of its diameter.

The rudder should be almost in line with the centerline of the boat. If it is constantly 10 or 15 degrees to one side, you have a difficult helm.

Raking your mast aft or reducing the size of your headsail can eliminate some lee helm. Moving the mast forward, reducing the size of your mainsail, reducing the roach area and or tightening the boom vang to take some fullness out of the sail can help a weather helm. Don't be afraid to experiment.

Try to get your boat perfectly trimmed so that she has a slight and constant tendency to head into the wind. This weather helm should become so insistent in a decks-awash squall that it will overpower the steering vane and automatically head your boat safely into the wind.

Some people install a wheel to overcome a bad weather helm. This doesn't cure the problem; it just hides the imbalance. It leaves the rudder at an acute angle to the centerline which causes extra drag and also puts unnecessary strains on the steering apparatus and the rudder itself. Wheel or tiller, getting your boat to balance well will help her sail better and give the windvane an easier job.

Before fitting your vane, your yacht should be on her lines, not way down fore or aft but within 1 inch (25 millimeters) of her designed load waterline. Being out of trim can make her hard to steer. If she is off her marks, put her on a diet. Throw out all that junk you might need "someday."

If you still have steering problems you might have to resort to hull changes. Maybe a larger rudder or an increased skeg aft. But you should get advice from a yacht designer before trying expensive surgery.



The transom stern and outboard rudder make it very simple to fit a windvane self-steering system.



This is a Freehand Steering System, built by Mike Anderson for *Little Wing*.

THE TRIM-TAB WINDVANE

Once you achieve good hull and sail plan balance, you are ready to start thinking about your self-steering device. Most people who have become unsatisfied with their windvane's performance skipped this most important first step—an easy-steering yacht.

It takes time and patience to get a vane to work well. When I first installed the vane on *Seraffyn* it worked about 70 percent of the time. It took me a year of fiddling and changing to improve it to 90 percent. In the next three years I modified every moving part until I got Helmer, as we called *Seraffyn's* self-steerer, to work in all conditions, including downwind under bare poles or running with the spinnaker if we had enough apparent wind to actuate the vane. It took a lot of head scratching, cursing, and persistence,

something buying an off-the-shelf vane self-steering system might have alleviated. But even with production-built steering systems, it will take you some time and testing to get things working well.

Both *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin* have a transom-hung rudder with a tiller. They are one of the easiest and least expensive types of boats to fit a windvane to. You can simply add a small rudder (trim tab) to the trailing edge of the main rudder. This small rudder controls the main rudder exactly the same way the main rudder controls the ship ([Figure 22.1](#)).

When I built our vanes I especially wanted good performance in the light-wind conditions as both boats were engine-free. Since friction is the main enemy of light-wind performance, I used Teflon bushings on all moving parts of the vane, and I installed Teflon¹ bushings on the main rudder's gudgeons and pintles.

To get a more sensitive vane I used thin-wall stainless-steel tubing as a framework and covered it with Dacron. This weighs about one-quarter of what a plywood vane with its counterweight does. I have found my vane of six square feet works just as well without a counterweight. Its total weight is only six pounds.

My trim tab is four feet deep and four inches wide with 20 percent of its area forward of the pintle centerline. This balanced effect makes it easier for the windvane to turn the trim tab in light winds. On this type of installation you should make the tab narrow and as deep as possible, similar to an aircraft's aileron. It should be about 4 inches from the bottom of the rudder to prevent damage when hauling or grounding.

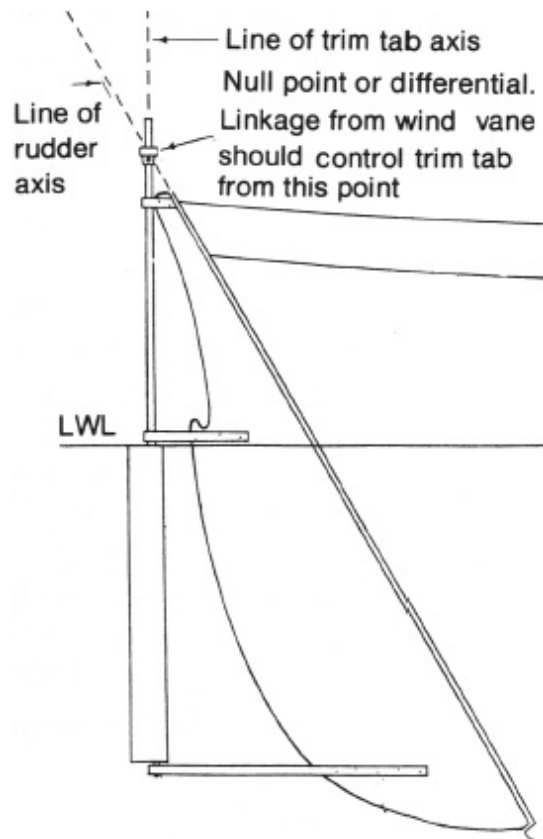


Figure 22.1

The most subtle design feature on the trim tab-type vane is rigging the control linkage from the windvane to the trim tab with a null point connection or zero movement point. This can also be called a differential. It should allow the main rudder to move independent of the trim tab and vice versa.

In other words, when the trim tab is moved by the windvane and it in turn swings the main rudder, the trim tab and its linkage should be unaffected by the main rudder's movement ([Figure 22.1](#)).

I prefer the trim tab-type of vane with an outboard rudder because it is usually cheaper and simpler to build than a vane with separate rudder and because it can't foul lines, driftwood, or flotsam. I can remove our tiller to clear the cockpit, and the vane steers the rudder just as happily. But most trim tab installations on outboard rudders have to be at least partially custom-made and designed so few people rig them themselves.

If your yacht is well balanced, the store-bought gear is usually the easiest and maybe the cheapest way to go.

TESTING YOUR VANE

When you're testing your new windvane, go offshore five or ten miles to get away from the erratic coastal winds. If the wind is changing direction quickly as it often does near the land, it is hard to know if your vane is holding course or following a wind shift.

As you try out your gear, be sure there is no friction. If your vane works by using control lines from the vane to the vane steering tiller, be sure the lines are slightly loose to the touch. If they are too snug, they add friction to the system.

A vane gear will work your boat to windward much better than the best helmsman, especially at night. It will pick up every wind shift and immediately adjust your course to the ideal sailing angle without tiring or getting bored.

When you are tacking in shifting winds, note the compass course regularly. If in your three-hour watch you observe a gradual lift from due north to 50 degrees magnetic, you can safely plot your course on the chart at the end of your watch as an average made good of 25 degrees. This works just the same if you are being headed and will give a reliable dead reckoning (DR) position.

If you are being headed and cannot lay about 45 or 50 degrees to your rhumb line course, you should note your log reading and time on your chart, then come about. This will put you on the more favorable tack with the wind lifting you closer to your rhumb line instead of slanting away from your desired course. This is a very basic racing tactic. Your windvane will show you the wind shifts. It is up to you to take advantage of them.

KNOWING YOUR WINDVANE'S LIMITATIONS

Windvanes have their limitations. They need apparent wind to steer your boat. When you are sailing with the wind aft you must subtract the boat's

speed from the actual wind speed. In 6 knots of wind with your boat moving 3 knots, the effective or apparent vane-actuating wind velocity is only 3 knots. This is why sailing downwind in light winds is a windvane's weak spot.

Reaching or running, you can expect your windvane to zigzag five or eight degrees either side of your plotted course. Your course made good will average out at the middle figure of the zigzag course. Broad reaching, seven or ten degrees wandering can be expected. Dead downwind 10-degree wander either side is standard. This wander depends greatly on sea conditions and wind strength. When broad reaching before a large sea, most boats tend to head up as they accelerate over a wave and down its face. You can help your vane in these conditions by sheeting the jib in five or ten degrees flatter than normal and trimming the mainsail so it luffs as soon as the boat starts to round up. Because the jib is sheeted flatter than normal, it holds the bow down long enough to give the vane time to react and put you back on course.

In stronger conditions you might put a reef in the main or drop it and broad reach under jib alone.

Sailing downwind wing and wing, I like to split the sail area so it is more or less equal each side. In strong winds and big seas the windvane works well if I put all of my area forward by using the jib or staysail alone. This area all the way forward tends to pull the boat by its nose and assist the vane to keep a good course.

When I raced around Britain on a Sparksman & Stephens fin-and- skeg 30-foot sloop, we had a Hasler Pendulum Servo gear and it worked well until we pushed the boat over 7 knots. At this stage the boat began to wander quickly side to side and we had to hand steer.

The solution when you are not racing is to shorten sail to a more comfortable cruising speed.

Shock cord on the tiller or to the spokes of your wheel is another way to reduce wander. By tying some tension on one side of the tiller you can eliminate some moderate weather or lee helm. With two shock cords, one port and one starboard, you can limit overcorrecting. With the shock cords,

the vane doesn't force the tiller hard aport then hard astarboard. Trial and error will teach you how much tension you need in any given condition.

Remember when adjusting your vane to various conditions, it is only mechanical and cannot anticipate the sea conditions. It can only react after the boat has moved off course.

Like all gear on a boat, a windvane has its disadvantages. The vane is hung over the transom and is susceptible to damage. When you are tied stem-to Mediterranean-style, it is harder to rig a boarding ladder. It is not safe to use the vane approaching harbors or within three or four miles of the coast, especially at night. With only one person on watch and the other asleep, the watchkeeper could nod off or black out. A wind shift could put your vessel, steered by your own vane, on the rocks. Don't laugh—this has happened. To be safe, hand steer within three or four miles of the coast or stay well off.

It is important to keep a watch even if the windvane is working. Unexpected wind shifts do happen as we learned when we approached Rangiroa in the Tuamotus. We left the Marquesas and a few days later decided to heave to about 40 miles off the a steep to atoll and make our final approach in daylight. In the morning after taking a round of star sights to confirm our position, we made an almost perfect landfall at Rangiroa atoll using just celestial navigation. We were about two miles off the reef as we reached along, heading towards the main entrance to the lagoon. Lin went below to make breakfast while I sat on the companionway sill keeping an eye on things and chatting with Lin. Then I climbed down into the cabin to get another cup of coffee and got chatting. What seemed like only minutes later, I noticed a change in the boat's motion, and rushed out into the cockpit. Lin was close behind when I yelled, "We're almost in the breakers!" Working together, adrenalin pumping, we got the sails sheeted in hard and the boat working to windward with less than a few hundred yards between us and the reef. Lesson learned and never again forgotten!

YOU'LL ENJOY CRUISING MORE WITH A RELIABLE WINDVANE

Persist in balancing your hull and rig. Fit your own home-built windvane or install a store-bought model. Learn how to help the vane do its job better. Having a full-time efficient windvane is a godsend, as it reduces the number of crew needed. What is more, you can spend your time on watch being extra careful with navigation and sail trim. In short, an efficient windvane is the most valuable and most enjoyable piece of cruising gear a yacht can carry.

EXTRA NOTES ABOUT WINDVANES

Written by Lin for the third edition of Self-Sufficient Sailor

These days, people are put off by the difficulty of installing a windvane self-steering system. Several factors contribute to this trend: the ever-lessening price of solar panels, the increase in size of the average cruising boat, and the propensity for carrying dinghies in davits, to name a few. Instead of the mechanical ease of a windvane, cruisers today are choosing to use auto-pilots. This is unfortunate, for auto-pilots have their drawbacks. Not only do they require electrical power to work, they can also have a difficult time controlling a boat as the seas increase. Furthermore, they steer to a compass course, and are therefore nowhere near as efficient to windward. Portable, electrically run auto-pilots tend to have a short working life, with the biggest problem caused by moisture that can too easily get into the electrical components and flux compass. The best combination for a shorthanded crew would be to have both windvane and auto-pilot, and to carry two auto-pilots. But if there were budgetary restrictions, the windvane self-steering system should be priority, despite the initial costs or installation difficulties.

As Larry's chapter mentions, it was relatively easy to build and install a vane system on our two vessels as they both had outboard rudders and wide transoms with a boomkin to help the vane clear the backstay. But for those who have the skills and patience to build their own vane, the book, *Self-steering for Sailing Craft*, written by John Letcher will give you enough detail to design one that overcomes any obstacles your boat design presents.

It is out of print but a pdf is available on line at:
jesterchallenge.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/self-steering-for-sailing-craft-by-john-s-letcher-jr-small.pdf

It is not necessary to build your own vane gear to insure it suits your boat. Modern manufacturers have come up with various options to resolve this problem. During the four-and-a-half decades Larry and I sailed together, we used several different commercially built self-steering vanes and found each worked well, though each took getting used to. These included ones built by Monitor, Cape Horn, and Aries. These were on yachts as large as 50 feet in length and up to 23 tons of displacement. More recently, I have been voyaging on a ten-ton 40-footer with a Hydrovane self-steering gear. Each of these vanes worked well, if the sails were trimmed first to ensure the boat did not have excessive weather helm. Michelle Elvy, the editor of this 3rd edition, has been using a Sailomat vane for more than fifteen years and swears by the simplicity of its design and the ease of repair. This ease of maintenance is a very important factor to consider as you shop around.

Some of the online sources for windvane self-steering gear include:

Aries: ariesvanegear.com

Cape Horn: capehorn.com

Hydrovane: hydrovane.com

Sailomat: sailomat.com

Monitor: scanmarinternational.com, garhauermarinehardware.co.nz (in New Zealand)

When Larry and I built *Taleisin's* self-steering gear, we decided to experiment and try to simplify the gear by using the backstay as the pivot for the vane. After a bit of experimentation, this turned out to be a fine idea. Various people asked for the design plans of our gear. Larry's answer was always, "It wasn't a design—designs work right the first time. It was an evolution." Eventually, with Larry's assistance, a younger boatbuilder named

Mike Anderson came on board to sail with us for a while and sketched up plans for the vane. He then went on to custom build these vanes for other sailors. You can view a series of videos he made to help vane owners install and use their Freehand Vanes on YouTube: [freehand+steering+system+youtube](#)

Mike has agreed to make these plans available for those who want to build their own.²

1 Teflon is preferable to nylon for this application as it tends to absorb less water (therefore swells less) and is better at retaining its lubricity in spite of the heat caused by friction.

2 The plans are simple drawings of the gear parts with dimensions, plus photos, and consist of 23 8-1/2 by 11-inch pages. Cost to cover copying and postage within the USA is \$40.00. Ten dollars of this will be donated to the Larry Pardey Children's Observatory. Contact Mike by writing to Mike Anderson, 226 21st street, Newport beach CA 92663 or by email: mav5252@gmail.com.

For those who do not have a transom-hung rudder but still wish to build their own vane, take a look at John Letcher's book, *Self-Steering for Sailing Yachts*. If you cannot find a secondhand copy, you can download a pdf at <https://jesterchallenge.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/self-steering-for-sailing-craft-by-john-s-letcher-jr-small.pdf>

23

Handy Headsail Dowsings



Written by Larry

For easier headsail handling if you use hanked-on jibs, try using a jib downhaul. With or without a bowsprit, this is a good piece of gear for single or shorthanded sailing.

I was first mate on an 85-foot 120-ton gaff-rigged schooner when I first used a jib downhaul. As we ran from Los Angeles to Honolulu (and back), one of the crewman could ease the jib sheets and, with the halyard tail secured, haul the jib down the forestay without going forward of the mast area. Going forward alone to pull the luff down the headstay on a boat that size could be dangerous.

Then, when the sail was down, he could muzzle the large headsail into the jib net and work out on the bowsprit to secure the sail with gaskets (sail-stops) that were permanently attached to the top of the spar.

A jib downhaul can be just as useful on any shorthanded cruising yacht no matter what size. To rig a jib downhaul, you splice a light line through the eye of the halyard shackle (Figure 32.1). This line should be a small diameter, soft lay, three-strand nylon or Dacron so that it will not jam or

kink when hoisting the sail. It should lead down to and through a single block at the tack, then back along the deck to a handy open cleat near the mast.

The bitter end of the downhaul line should be secured through the open cleat with a figure-eight knot or a bowline tied around a leg of the cleat. The end of the jib halyard should also be secured in this way.

A shackle put through the eye-splice of the halyard and around the forestay permits you to leave the downhaul and halyard snap shackle in position at the lower end of the forestay. When the downhaul line is tightened and secured, it holds the sail down and keeps the head of the jib, with its heavy shackle, from swinging around and whacking you on the head while you are working on the foredeck.

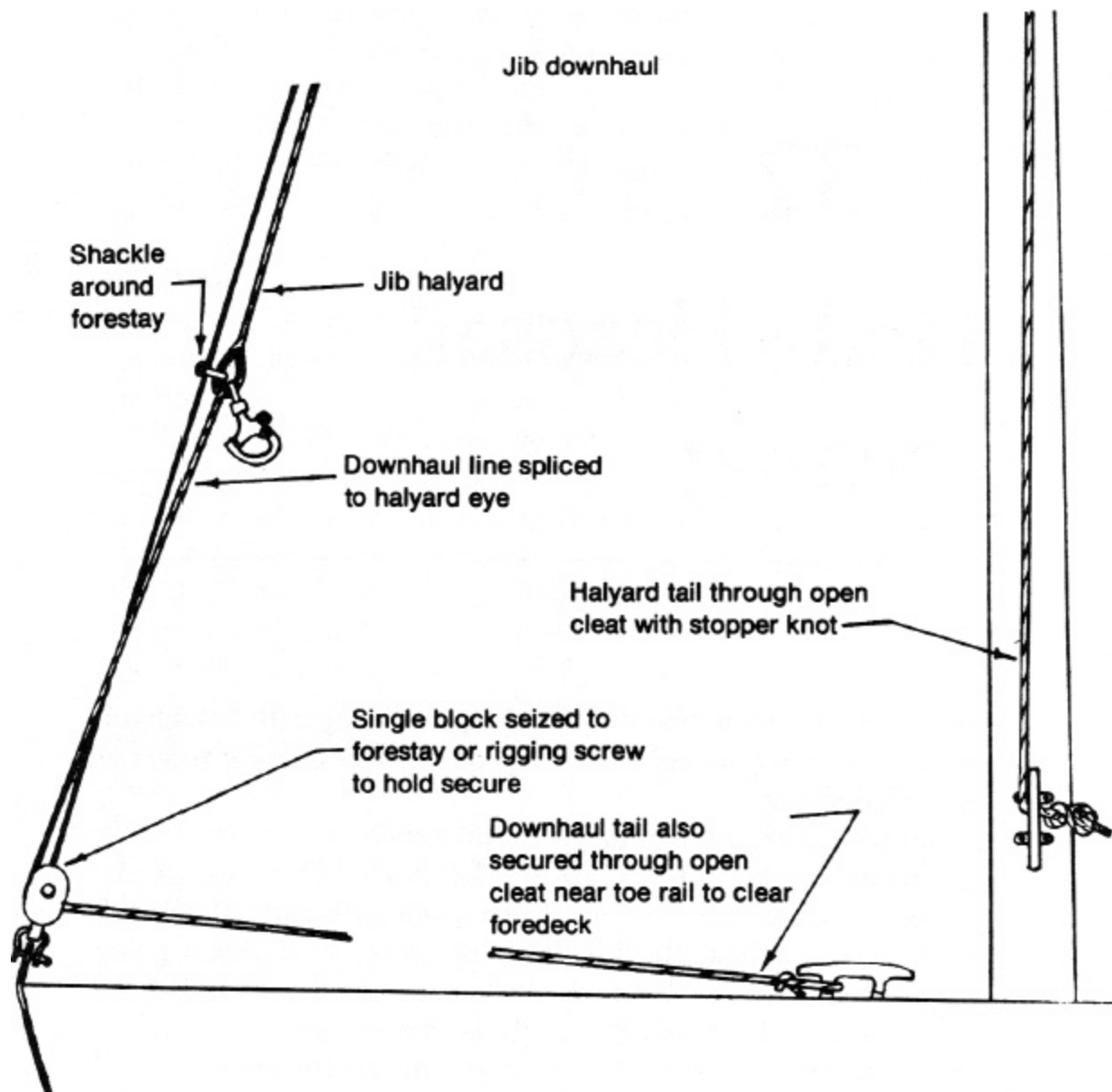


Figure 23.1

When you are ready to hoist your jib, uncleat the downhaul line and coil it on deck ahead of time so it runs free. It may take a bit of time to work all the kinks out of a new piece of line so be patient and watch it carefully when you are pulling on the halyard. If your jib has a wire luff and the hanks are of minimum size, the bending of the luff wire can cause the hanks to twist and jam on the headstay. Larger hanks will usually solve this

hang-up. Rope luff or stretchy luff sails are better and downhaul like a dream.

Other advantages of the downhaul shackled to the forestay are that the halyard cannot be lost accidentally halfway up the mast; you simply pull it back with the downhaul line. Your downhaul also can double as a stowing pennant to keep the halyard from banging against the mast. Finally, this inexpensive piece of gear also allows you to send an anchor light aloft easily and quickly. And you can get it down again as well.

The next time you take your jib down alone, think about how much safer and more convenient it might be if you eased the halyard, then pulled the jib down to the deck or jib net while you stood safely back near the mast.

24

Idle Wooden Boats Make for Rotten Hulls



Written by Larry

The finest surviving example of a wooden clipper ship is sitting out in the English rain, neither completely wet nor completely dry, rotting and shrinking, costing the Cutty Sark Preservation Society thousands of pounds each year for repairs, mainly for the lack of the *Cutty Sark*'s natural element: salt water. It is only 100 yards away in the tidal Thames. When we inquired after it, we got a written reply from the retired admiral of the British Navy, head of the Cutty Sark Preservation Society: "Many years ago we decided to keep *Cutty Sark* in dry dock. As you know, good timber will keep indefinitely if either completely dry or completely wet. We chose to keep her dry."

Don't give your wooden vessel a steady diet of rain water and twenty lashes with the fresh water hose. Salt her down! This, along with good ventilation, will probably make her last as long as the Falmouth Oyster

cutters. These beautiful sailing smacks, built of pitch pine on oak and fastened with iron, are almost all “three score and ten.” One regularly working cutter is actually 180 years old! They dredge for oysters eight months in the winter. In the summer they race in local regattas as the working boat class. Arfie Trenier, who owned and fished the very fast *Magdalena*, observed, “The boats that sit on the mooring all winter have much more problem with rot than the boats that work dragging oyster trawls.”

The cutters that are dredging are constantly being washed down with salt water. The unused ones, hanging on their moorings, get only rain water.

With rot, the prevention can be much easier than the cure! Keep your wooden boat swollen up tight and free from rot by washing her down at dusk with a nice salt bath, so the salt water will have all night to seep down into the nooks and crannies. Be sure to do this in the evening: salt water put on during the day evaporates before it has time to do its work.

Along with salt water baths at dusk, the old working vessels that were fitted with interior ceiling used to have boxes installed between their frame heads. These containers had small holes in the bottom and held lumps of rock salt. Moisture collected by the salt kept a steady drip of brine running under the ceiling to pickle the hull right down to the bilges. I have seen these boxes on a Baltic trader that was cruising in Mexico, and after eighty years the unpainted oak of the 90-foot long vessel was still hard and sound.

Good air circulation is as important to your boat as clean air is to your lungs. A lot of potential rot spots are built into wooden hulls and I would suspect rot in any area of a boat that has restricted air flow—closed-in bulwark rails, narrow counter sterns, or behind permanent closed ceilings. These pockets of still warm air are breeding grounds for mold and rot spores.

The cure? Create ventilation. Drill holes in any enclosed space. Don’t use wall-to-wall carpets that will trap the air in the bilge. Make floorboards removable with 1-inch fingerholes. Rather than fit the floorboards tight to the frames and planking (a difficult and time-consuming job), have

kickboards fastened to the frames ([Figure 24.1](#)). These kickboards will allow free air circulation between the frames and down into the bilge.

A tongue-and-groove or tight-fitted ceiling permanently fastened from stem to stern hides a multitude of problems. You can't clean or paint behind it. The ventilation is restricted, and you can't inspect for bad fastenings, fresh water pockets, or rot.

Internal ceiling was originally used in large working sailing boats for extra structural strength and protection. If cargo was mistakenly dropped in the hold, it didn't spring the planks. Since you are not carrying cargo in most yachts, even open ceiling should only be used where necessary, next to bunks or for esthetic reasons. This ceiling should be made of fore-and-aft slats with ¼-inch gaps between each one, fastened down with oval or raised head screws ([Figure 24.1](#)). The screws, instead of nails, allow easy removal for inspection, maintenance or emergency repairs at sea. The gap allows adequate air flow.

Sheer clamps (called a beam shelf in England) fitted up tight to the deck restrict air flow. Ideally the deck beams should rest on the top of the sheer clamp and allow air movement around the clamp and between the deck and planking ([Figure 24.2](#)).

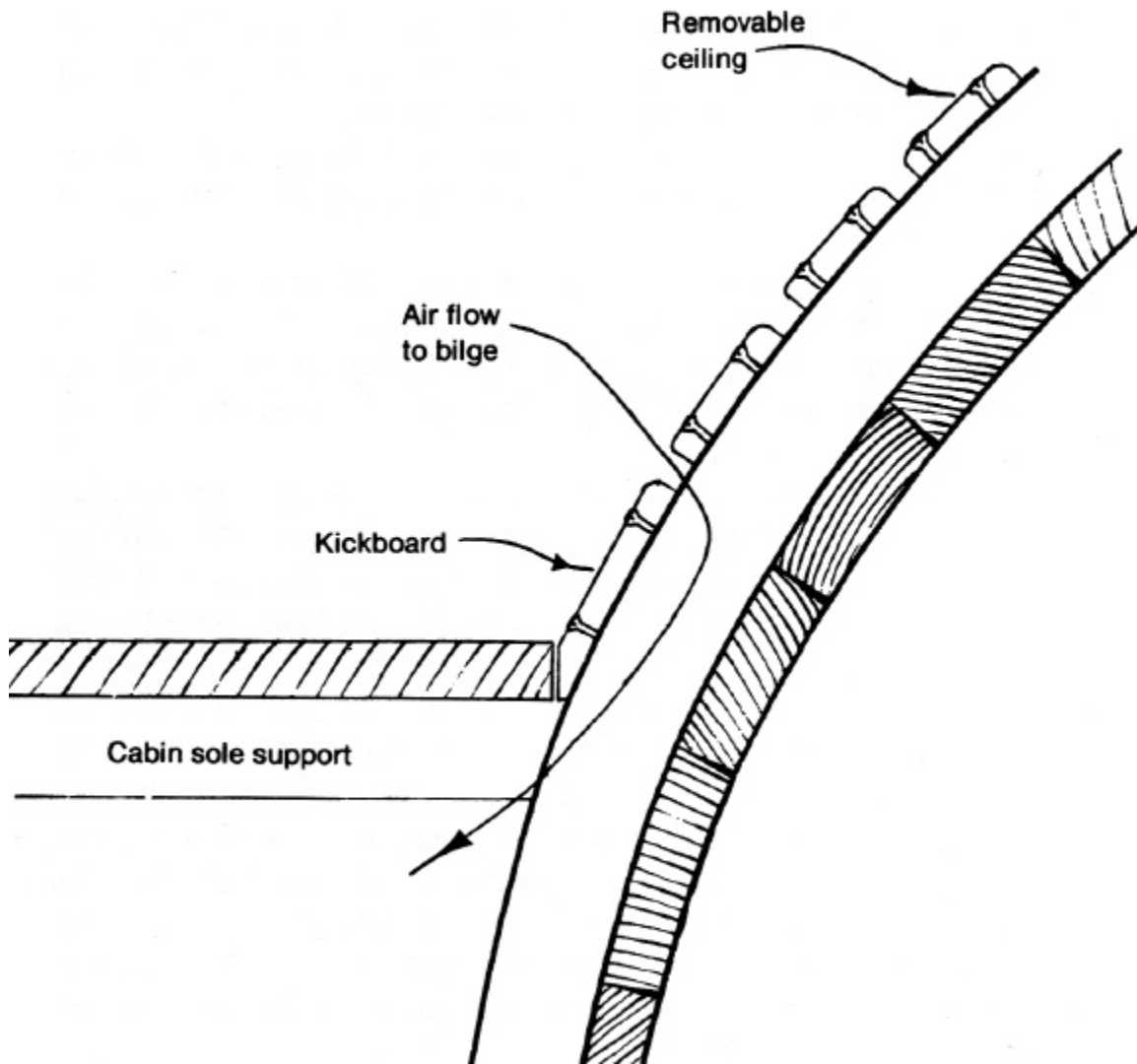


Figure 24.1

Open slat partitions are better for storage lockers used to hold damp things such as line, warps, anchors, and sails. Lightweight, easy-to-build, well-ventilated sail bins can be made with nylon fish netting.

Lin once complained, “My onions and potatoes are spoiling in their locker.” The drain holes to the bilge were not enough ventilation. So I bored several 1-inch holes in an inconspicuous side of the locker and— presto!— no rotten spuds. If the potatoes were rotting, so in time could our wooden hull.

Be extra careful of fresh-water pockets, especially leaks or condensation from your icebox and sink. Make sure butt blocks on your

planking have ¼-inch gaps on either side or bevelled tops so water does not get trapped.

Frame heads should be sawn off with an inboard slant so water will run off (Figure 24.2). The bottom of the mast step mortise should have a hole for drainage. (A copper coin under the mast was not just for luck but had practical reasons. The coin gave off copper sulphate, the basis of most anti-rot preparations.)

I would sooner sell my little cutter and buy a farm than paint out my varnished spars. The mast is the crankshaft of the sailing vessel. Engineers would love to have a little X-ray window to look at the condition of the bearing inserts or crankshafts of their engines. With varnished spars you have that window and can see the darkening caused by fresh water seeping into the wood, under tangs and around fittings, before it becomes rot. You can observe the condition of your glue joints.

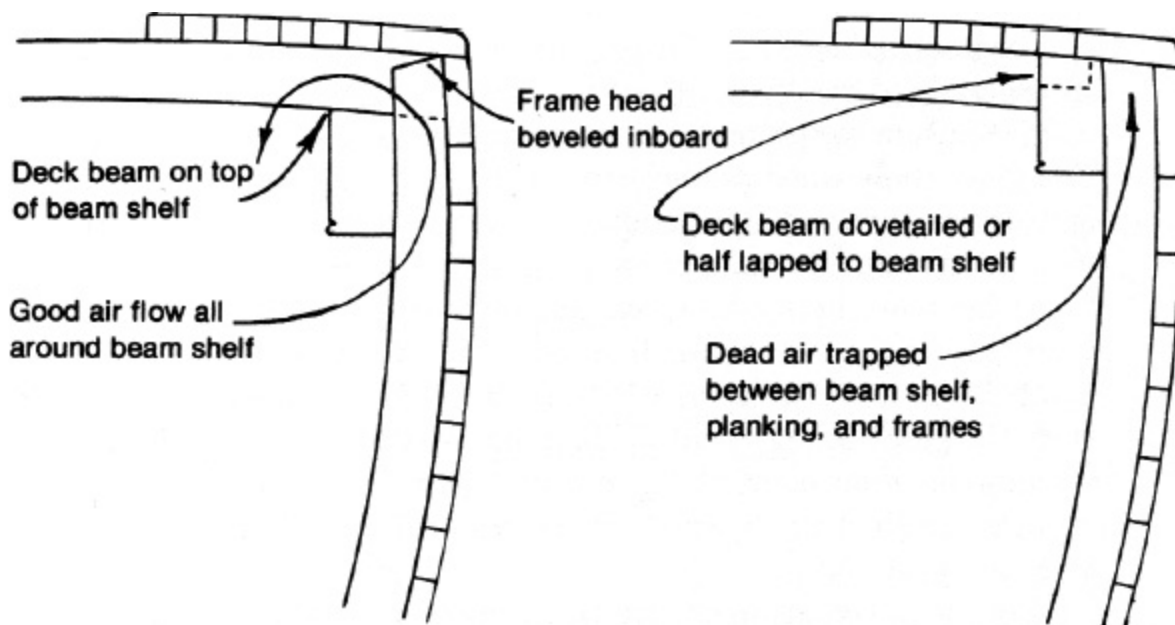


Figure 24.2

Going aloft every six months to inspect your spar and rigging is a must, and so it is not much extra work to sand the spar as you do your inspecting on the way up, then varnish on the way down. On a 40-foot spar it can

usually be done in about six hours. Paint out your spar and you still have to go aloft to inspect twice a year, but you won't be able to see the actual condition of your mast.

A wooden spar has all the ventilation it needs, but must be protected from fresh water. (I hope you rarely get good old salt water at the masthead.) I use $\frac{1}{16}$ "-inch copper sheet to line my halyard sheave box. It protects against the chafe of halyards. Wood chafed bare at the masthead can absorb fresh water, causing rot. Thin copper sheet covering the top and rolled over the radiused edge of your spreader, bedded in with mastic or Dolphinite, will eliminate rot and the need to paint or varnish the top of your spreader. Spreader failure is the most common cause of mast failure.

Removing the rot caused by a thin layer of fiberglass and polyester resin laid over one lamination of fir plywood on decks and cabins is the most common repair job I have done. The flexing of the boat causes the butt joints of the plywood, which are usually landed on the relatively narrow top of a deck beam, to work and crack the single layer of nonflexible glass. The minute cracks allow fresh water into the end grain of the plywood and cause rot that spreads very quickly.

One solution to this problem is to glue the butt joints with resorcinol glue, apply wood preservatives, then paint and apply nonskid right on the plywood. This allows the wood to breathe from both sides. Water can't be trapped under a layer of glass.

Another solution is to buy good quality marine-grade void-free hardwood plywood which is much more resistant to rot than fir and, instead of using a single $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch layer, use two layers of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch plywood. Stagger the butt joints and glue both layers of ply together with resorcinol glue. This will stop any movement and give a stronger deck. Now apply your resin glass to the bare plywood. Two or three layers will resist cracking better than one.

If your fore and aft decks are laid tongue-and-groove, a flexible canvas covering is better than resin glass as you are almost certain to get cracks caused by the movement of the many seams. Epoxy resin is supposed to be more flexible than polyester resins and could be used in place of canvas and

paint, but the two-part epoxy resins are hard to work as you can't control curing time.

If you add a layer of teak over plywood, bed the teak in resorcinol glue ([Figure 24.3](#)). I didn't realize how great the rot-preventive and waterproofing characteristics of resorcinol glue were until I had the job of modifying the afterdeck and cockpit of a 14-year-old 40-foot cutter in Poole, England. One side of the deck had been damaged in a collision and the repair had been done by substituting a normal bedding compound between the teak and the mahogany plywood. The rest of the teak was still bedded in resorcinol, the work of the original builder. As I ripped up the whole 15 feet of afterdeck, all the areas of plywood under the bedding compound were rotten. But just like night and day, the plywood under the waterproof resorcinol glue was perfectly sound.

One word of warning about plywood. I was talking to a boatbuilding friend from Canada's West Coast. He said he now had to order special plywood with all laminations solid fir because lately even the marine-grade fir plywood was being produced with a hemlock core. Hemlock has a very low resistance to rot. To avoid the problem, solid Bruynzeel mahogany plywood to British standard 1066 is the best bet.

All jointed surfaces such as the edges of plywood bulkheads where planking fits to frames, or where fittings are fastened to the hull, deck, or spars, should be sealed in some way. The very best product I know of for this job is fungicidal Dolphinite. I have removed two bulwark strakes from a wood stanchion on a five-year-old boat. The lower strake was bedded in Dolphinite and the jointed surfaces of both the mahogany bulwark strake and the oak stanchion were in perfect condition. The other strake, not sealed with Dolphinite, had fresh water in the joint and had started to rot. The rot stopped right where the Dolphinite began.

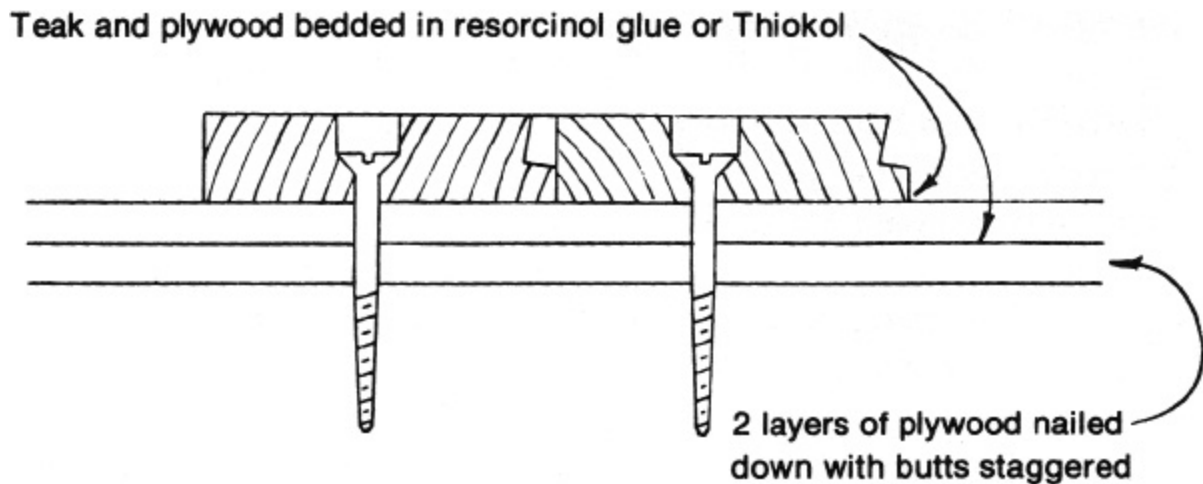


Figure 24.3

Wooden boats don't have to rot. The more you use them the better. Each time you open the companionway you'll increase the ventilation. Each time you head out to sea you can't help but get salt water on the boat. With proper open construction, lots of salt water, and lots of use, a wooden boat will last longer than its builder.

25

A Near-fatal Bit of Carelessness



This chapter was written as an article for Sail magazine in 1974 just a day after the incident happened. It is just as relevant today, more than four decades later, as it was when I wrote it. -LP

For four-and-a-half years we'd cruised half the world aboard our 24-foot cutter *Seraffyn*. All that time we kept reminding ourselves that the sea watches for the unwary. As a result, until yesterday even our worst mistake resulted in no more than some scraped paint when the tide swept us against a fairway buoy.

Yesterday, however, we were almost killed by a very simple bit of carelessness while lying peacefully moored in front of the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club.

We had had a nice dinner aboard in the evening. Since it was cold and drizzly, we turned on our heater, lit the oil lamps, and played a game of gin rummy. A heavy rain set in, so we closed our skylight hatch and at 2200 got ready for bed.

I climbed in first; Larry blew out the lamps and joined me. It was much cooler in the forward cabin, since we have a 3-inch ventilator in the chain

locker and the chain locker opens right into the cabin. So we left the propane heater on, as we had on other nights, and went to sleep, cozy and secure in our double bunk.

At 0600 we both woke up with headaches. Larry got us two aspirins each, then I went into the main cabin to use the head. That is the last thing I remember.



On *Taleisin* we had a 3-inch-diameter stovepipe to safely vent the kerosene burning heater (similar to diesel burning heaters).

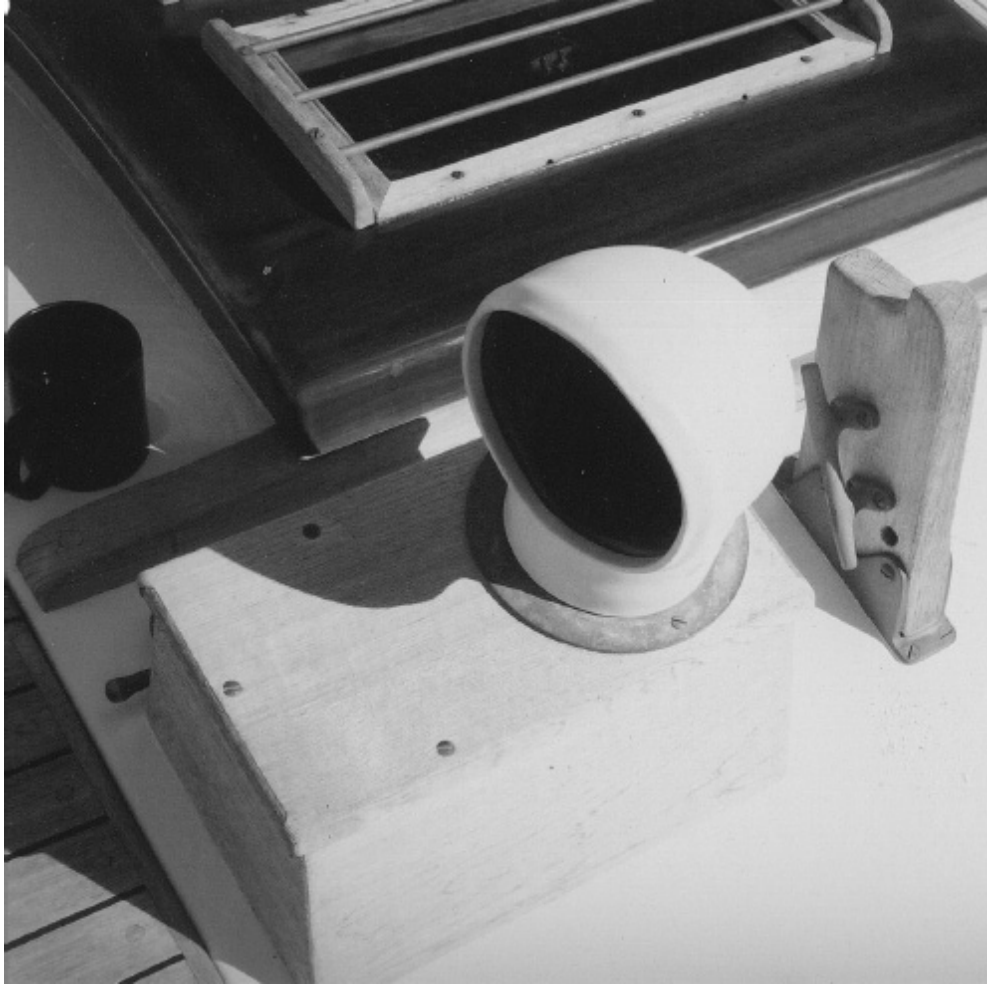
Larry said the sound of my falling woke him. He rushed from the bunk and found me unconscious on the cabin sole, deathly white. He pulled me up onto the settee but I was still out, so he opened the sliding hatch to let in some cold air. Slowly I came to. I was hysterical and possibly delirious, and I can still remember a horrible sense of fear as I lay on the forward bunk recovering.

Gradually it dawned on us that our watertight boat was airtight also, and we had both been slowly suffocating from carbon monoxide. More fresh air had us feeling better, but it took most of the day to get over the nauseous feeling.

One open ventilator obviously wasn't enough for the whole boat. We had had only headaches while in the forward bunk within five feet of the air scoop. Only when I went aft and sat down in the main cabin was I overcome—because we had shut the main skylight.

Today, one of the members of the yacht club told us about the worst tragedy of the season on the Norfolk Broads. Two couples were found dead, sitting around an uneaten dinner on board their small cruiser. The wailing of a small baby attracted the attention of some people strolling on the pier. They found the child in the forepeak of the boat, near the chain locker with its open chain pipe. Its parents had died ten feet away in the main cabin, warm and secure against the cold night, suffocated by their charcoal stove.

Carbon-monoxide suffocation is painless. The only signs are a tired feeling and maybe a headache. Fortunately preventive ventilation is easy to achieve. One opening forward is not enough, since it doesn't create a flow of air. But a large ventilator, hatch, or port light open forward *and* one aft provides good through-ventilation. Without this flow of oxygen, we found, death waits in the cheery glow of a cabin heater.



We also had two Dorade vents to ensure sufficient airflow through the boat.

A WORD OF WARNING. Many boats now have hard dodgers which protect the companionway so it can be left open just a bit to allow for ventilation. Unfortunately, this is may not be enough to guarantee airflow throughout the boat and minimize the risk of carbon-monoxide build up, especially if you have partition doors for your staterooms. You need both an air intake and an air exhaust. Thus, for safety, any heater that burns solid or liquid fuel (as opposed to passive heaters, such as electrical or water-circulating heaters) should have a smoke stack and smoke head designed to vent the CO gases. Boats are amazingly airtight structures, and Dorade vents, plus one other air source, are best for any boat with a heater.

26

The Indispensables



It took us eight-and-a-half years of cruising to find we already were carrying the perfect rain catcher. My mother gave us the perfect stove lighter as a farewell gift. We read about the handiest piece of canvas on board in one of the Hiscock books. We finally found the perfect crab and lobster boiling pot after three years of frustration. And so it goes, year in, year out, as you live and cruise on your floating home. Simple ideas appear that make your life easier, more comfortable, safer, or more fun. We got a big kick out of finding solutions to these minor problems and adding the solutions to our list of what we called “the indispensables.”

THE HISCOCK CANVAS SQUARE

Eric and Susan Hiscock wrote about an indispensable 3-foot-by-4-foot square of heavy water-resistant canvas they carried on *Wanderer III*. It had strong grommets sewn in each corner. As we built one for *Seraffyn*, we made two slight alterations. We added a center patch with a lifting eye and spliced a piece of ¼-inch line 5 feet long into each corner ([Figure 26.1](#)). That canvas is one of the most useful items on board. When it is raining and hot, we tie it

across the forehatch, hoist its center lifting eye on a halyard, then open the forehatch for ventilation without getting any rain below.

If we need to protect the decks or bulwarks while we shift stores on board, the canvas does the job. If Larry is doing woodwork or metalwork jobs below, we tie the canvas in place to catch the shavings. If a squall comes up and there is something on deck that has just been varnished or painted, we can lash the cover in place quickly to keep the rain off. It serves as an instant spray dodger, ice carrier, and companionway cover. When we are sailing, it is small enough to be rigged overhead to provide shade without getting in the way of handling the sails. When the sun starts to sneak below the edge of our cockpit awning, that square can be easily attached as a shade. It never cuts down on the cooling breezes nor is it permanently in the way like a permanent canvas side curtain would be. And, until we discovered our new secret rain catcher, we used the Hiscock square to catch tropical rain water.

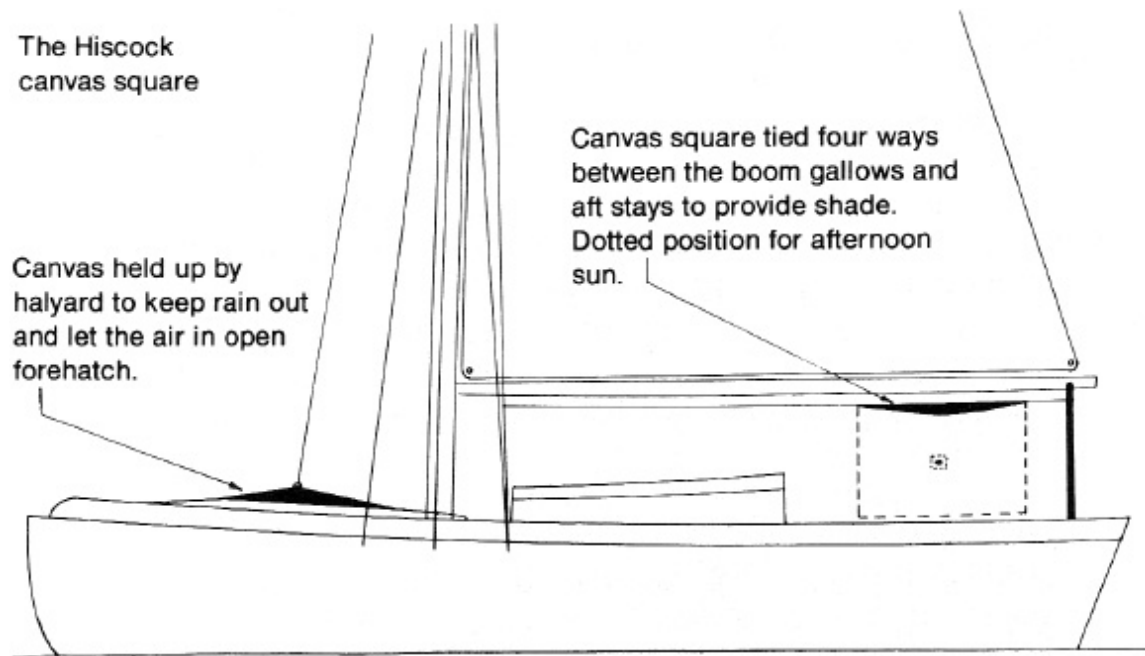


Figure 26.1

When we launched *Taleisin*, because we had extra storage space, we added a second, larger Hiscock Canvas. This one was five by six feet. It got

used both on board and on forays ashore as to provide extra shade, or to protect groceries and fresh laundry from sudden tropical downpours.

PARDEYS' UNPATENTED NEARLY-PERFECT- PASSAGE-MAKING RAIN CATCHER

We're not sure why it took us eight-and-a-half years of playing with all sorts of crazy rigs before we came up with this one. But somewhere in the Strait of Malacca we hit a lovely squall full of sweet cool rain. Larry turned to me with a bright-eyed look and said, "We've been carrying the perfect rain catcher all along." Much to my amazement he pulled in the main boom, tied our water-resistant mainsail cover (made of a material similar to Sunbrella upside down like a gutter under the main boom, and eased the mainsheet—and rain water started pouring off the mainsail, into the upside-down cover, and out the end near the gooseneck. The large part of the cover that usually shielded the head of the mainsail made a reservoir area. A few clothes pins channeled the water where we wanted it. Larry sewed a rope grommet into the lowest point so that a garden hose jams in easily. During the average rainfall, the water flows through that hose just like it was under pressure. Since the rain catcher can be left in place most of the time, we even caught as much as two gallons of water every twenty-four hours in the heavy fog we found on our North Pacific crossing. During a twenty-minute tropical downpour we could collect 40 gallons or more. During real heavy weather we did have to remove the rain catcher because it made reefing the mainsail more difficult.

Like most ideas, this one is probably far from original. But we are glad we thought of some way to make the sail cover serve a second purpose.

TWO-PART UNDERWATER PUTTY

Years ago, when epoxies first came into being, commercial divers dreamed up underwater putty. It was used to seal leaks on underwater construction jobs. It is wonderful stuff since its most important

characteristics are that it sticks well to wet surfaces, it cures underwater to a hard-as-rock finish, and it sticks to wood, fiberglass, or steel.

The main reason we carried underwater putty on *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin* was to cover gouges in the underwater planking after we've hit a chunk of driftwood or touched a coral head with the keel. Wooden boats are susceptible to worm damage if the antifouling paint is not fully intact. So any time there was a chance that the bottom paint was compromised, Larry would wait until the next calm day, dive overboard to inspect the scrapes and scratches, then wait while I mixed up the prescribed amount of putty on a thick piece of cardboard. He then used his finger to rub underwater putty on the scrapes. We could sand and fair up the putty when next we hauled the boat.

We used the same putty to help patch a hole in a steel hull that was the victim of electrolysis in Port Said, Egypt. A diver slathered putty on a piece of plywood that was larger than the hole in the steel, dove under and held the plywood and putty patch in place while the Larry worked inside the hull to thread self-tapping screws through the sound steel around the hole and into the plywood. The putty set up hard as steel and worked perfectly.

We've heard of delivery crews depending on the two-part wonder product to keep fiberglass boats with damaged hulls from leaking. There was even a case where the delivery crew made a one-foot square patch under the counter of an old racing yacht with underwater putty, plywood, and some nails, and then sailed the boat 3,000 miles to get it to its home shipyard.

We carry underwater putty in our fiberglass dinghy's emergency abandon- ship kit. The putty could seal damage caused by launching the dinghy in a hurry.

VERY SIMPLE HALYARD HOLDERS

Securing halyard ends so they stayed put, especially in rough weather, can present a problem. Halyard tail bags clutter up the mast area and often cause the lines to tangle. It was Hal Roth who showed us this simple idea for keeping mast halyards neatly coiled but instantly available so they always run free. We secure a small diameter line through the base of each mast

cleat, then make a loop in its other end. Simply coil the halyard tail, reach through the coil, and pull the halyard holder line through the coil and over the upper ear of the cleat.



It pays to secure the loop line to the cleat using bowlines until you are sure of the exact length. Only then should you tidy them up by using eye splices at each end. Photo credit Eben Bruyns.

On *Taleisin* we spliced the permanent end of the holder line to the base of the cleat and formed an eye splice for the hooking end. But on other boats we've sailed, we simply secured each end using a bowline. I recommend using this approach until you have determined the exact length you want each halyard holder line.

One word of warning: do not coil two lines onto the same holder. They can easily become tangled, which is not something you want if you need to release a halyard or lazy jack end quickly. Instead, where necessary, secure two separate halyard holder lines.



The Port Stick – Eben Bryns

THE PORT STICK

We never have found a formal name for this very simple addition to our lives. But since we used it only in port and also stored it in the port cockpit locker, it became known as the Port Stick.

We actually cut our first port stick from a piece of a broken dinghy spar we came across in a boatyard when we were securing *Taleisin* to do some work on her deck. We were trying to find a way to keep her deck clear but still have spring lines fore and aft. That's when one of us came up with this idea. We find the middle of one of our longer mooring lines then hitch it around the port stick as shown. The two ends go through the amidships rope leads.

This same idea can be used with only one line if you have strong rope leads through the forward or aft ends of your toe rails. Very low chafe, very strong, and easily removed.

These are just five of the indispensables we came up with for *Taleisin* and *Seraffyn*. As I consider all the interesting indispensables I have been shown by other sailors, I think the list could actually keep growing as long as I sail. Consider this idea I saw when I was sailing with Pete Nuteboom on his 28-foot Bristol Channel Cutter *Capriccio*. When lunch time came, he reached under a locker and pulled out a small companionway drop board with a glass and condiment tray attached to the back (Figure 26.3). Everyone's glasses stayed upright in the holes in the tray as we reached along on a 12-knot breeze. The salt and pepper were within easy reach.

And so we added another item to our work list. As Larry started working out the sketch to go with this last item, he came up with an idea that made it even more versatile for our use. And that is the way it goes: what was once Pete's idea for an "indispensable" on board *Capriccio* became part of the collection of details that made *Seraffyn* more than just a boat to go sailing on. She was a hassle-free home, bound for adventure.

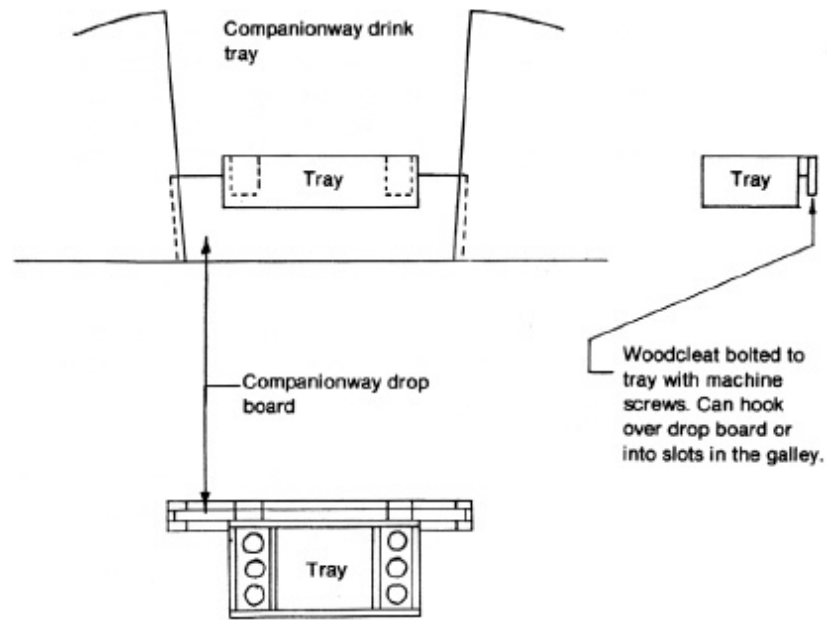


Figure 26.2

Winter Projects for a Cool Summer



Most sailors consider sun awnings and wind scoops specialized equipment for cruising boats on their way south to the tropics. Yet even in northern climates like the Puget Sound and Great Lakes, a two-week summer cruise can be less than fun when long hot days and constant sun glare turn your boat into an oven. Headaches, eyestrain, sweaty sleepless nights, restless overheated children, and sunburned shoulders can all be prevented by building some summer sailing gear now.

Even racing sailors should be able to carry the lightweight items that help you cool your boat. This in fact is one of the keys to the best boat air-conditioning devices: they must be lightweight. They also must be easy to store, simple to make, and inexpensive, since they could need replacing every two or three seasons. To make sure you use sun covers, wind scoops, and port light coolers, they must be very easy to put in place. But even more important, they must be easy and fast to remove. In the calmest, most sheltered anchorage, summer squalls can come up without warning. The strong gusts of wind could threaten the strongest sun cover. Your boat could start to drag or your neighbor could start to drag into you. That's when you'll

want your sun cover and wind scoop out of the way quickly so you can handle the ground tackle and maneuver with clear decks and full visibility.

SUN COVERS

Even if you have a bimini, there can be times when you want to create shady areas outside the cockpit, be it on the afterdeck or foredeck where the breeze can filter through to cool you. We carried two separate sun covers on our two cruising boats. One is a the Hiscock Canvas described at the beginning of this section. Once you go to sea this little shade patch can be set up in all sorts of ways to provide a cool spot for the watchkeeper. Since it is strong and small it can be left up in winds up to 25 knots. It can be strung between the boom gallows frame and a shroud to provide cocktail hour protection from a glaring late day sun. It also works as a side curtain when the full sun awning is in place at anchor.

After experimenting with dozens of sun cover ideas, we came up with several don'ts. Don't use Dacron sail cloth; it is noisy and won't last more than two seasons. Avoid wooden battens; they break too easily. Don't build a cover that goes forward of the mast; it is too difficult to put up, so you probably won't use it unless you've anchored for a long stay. Worse yet, once you have it up, you'll be reluctant to sail to a new spot because disassembling the cover will take too much time. Don't build side curtains directly onto the cover; they'll make it too bulky and cut off stray breezes so your awning area becomes like the inside of a tent.

We've found white synthetic canvas such as Sunbrella is best for long-lasting sun covers. It is strong and quiet in a breeze. On hot drizzly days, it is water-resistant enough to serve as a rain shelter. This way you can leave your sliding hatch open for ventilation and arriving guests will have a semi-dry place to shed their boots and foul weather gear before climbing below decks. For added luxury, a layer of one-ounce blue nylon (spinnaker cloth) on the bottom side of the cover could be added to cut down glare and make you feel even cooler.

For poles we used two-part aluminum tubes that socket together. Wooden knobs with holes drilled through them make end fittings that don't

chafe the hold-down lines. We placed tennis balls over the ends of each pole so nothing gets scratched when we're storing the cover away.

The most convenient size is as shown, with one end secured to the mast, the other to the back stay

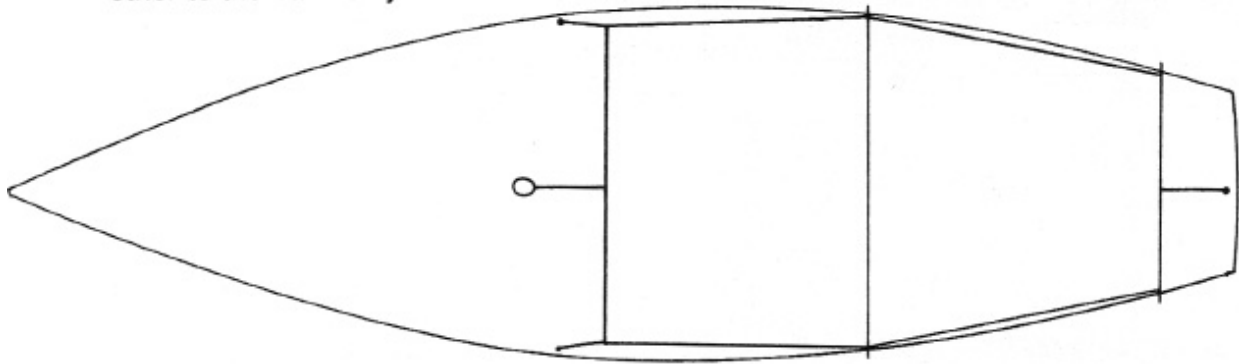


Figure 27.1

MEASURING FOR A SUN COVER

Once each edge of your sun cover is turned over and reinforced, fold the cover in half and secure a $\frac{3}{8}$ inch Dacron line along the center.

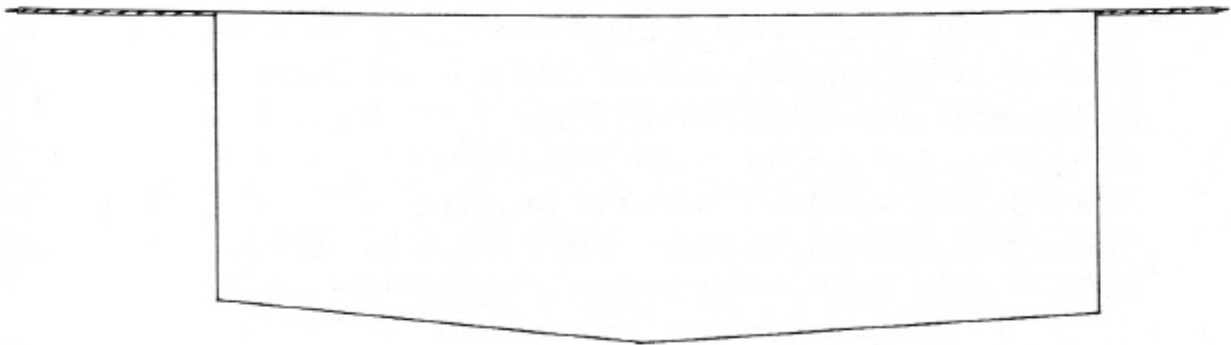


Figure 27.2

To stretch the canvas along the poles, secure a line to the reinforced grommets on the cover and run the line through the holes in the wooden end fittings. This same line then runs down to a handy tie down spot such as your lifelines.

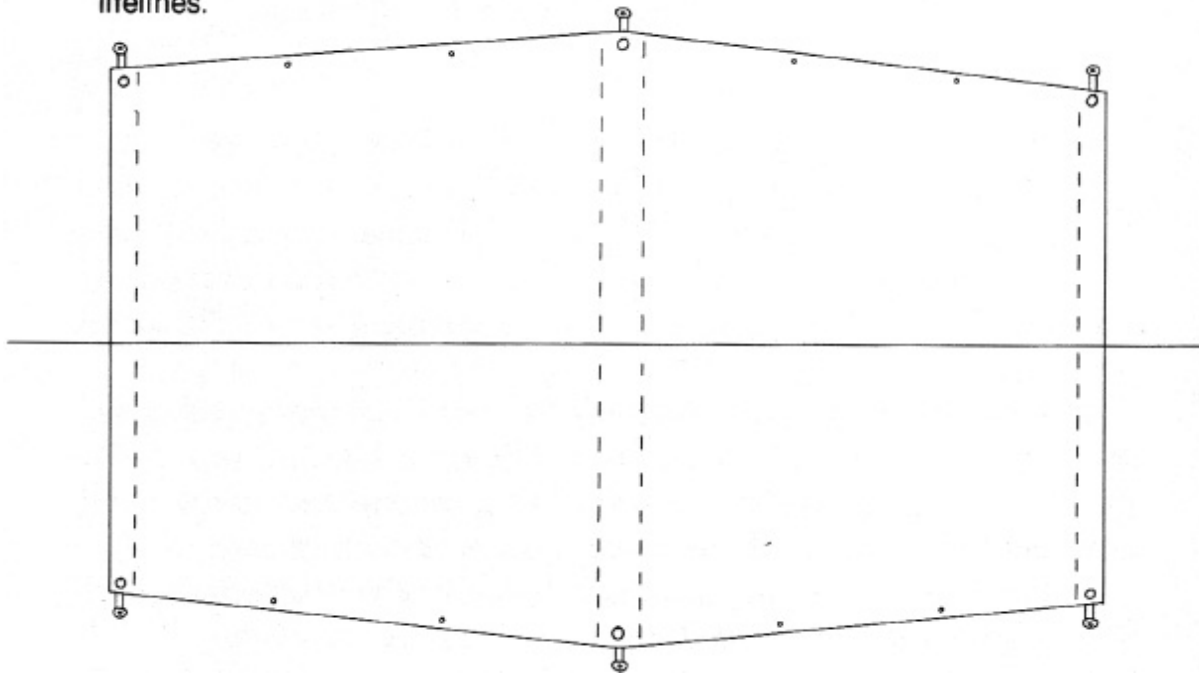


Figure 27.3

We've found that a cover reaching from the backstay to one foot aft of the mast and measuring the same width as the boat works well. By placing grommets between each tie-down, we could secure our small Hiscock Cloth as a sun shade to cut glare when the sun gets near the horizon.

A strip of Velcro running along the top edge of your cover could be used to attach a mosquito netting if this is a problem where you sail. Sandbag weights on the bottom of the net would hold it in place. I'd make sure this additional netting could be quickly removed; otherwise, the weights could become a flying menace when a squall came up.

We set our cover above the boom, one end tied to the backstay, the other to the mast. Three tie-downs per side seemed to be sufficient. We secured them with a running hitch so that getting the cover down is quite easy. If we were in a real hurry, both of us got right aft of the cover, untied one line at a time and rolled the cover into the wind.

We've been able to do this in up to 50-knot squalls. Rolled this way the cover makes a 9-foot-long package that is difficult to store away completely, however, so for passages we disassembled the aluminum poles, fold the cover in half, and roll it tightly. Our 9-foot-by-12-foot cover stored in a space 4.8 by 2 feet by 7 inches and weighed about nine pounds complete.

Andy, an American sailmaker cruising on his large sloop, *Jakaranda*, added a fine water-collection system to our sun awning with only about two hours' work. He sewed four fabric udders to the cover, 3 inches in from the edges at the middle of each section. We lash lengths of hose to each udder and lead them to various watertanks. During a 20-minute squall we have sometimes collected 60 or 70 gallons of water with his system. When we do not need to collect rain water, the udders can be rolled up and kept out of the way with tiny straps that Andy placed right next to the collection holes.

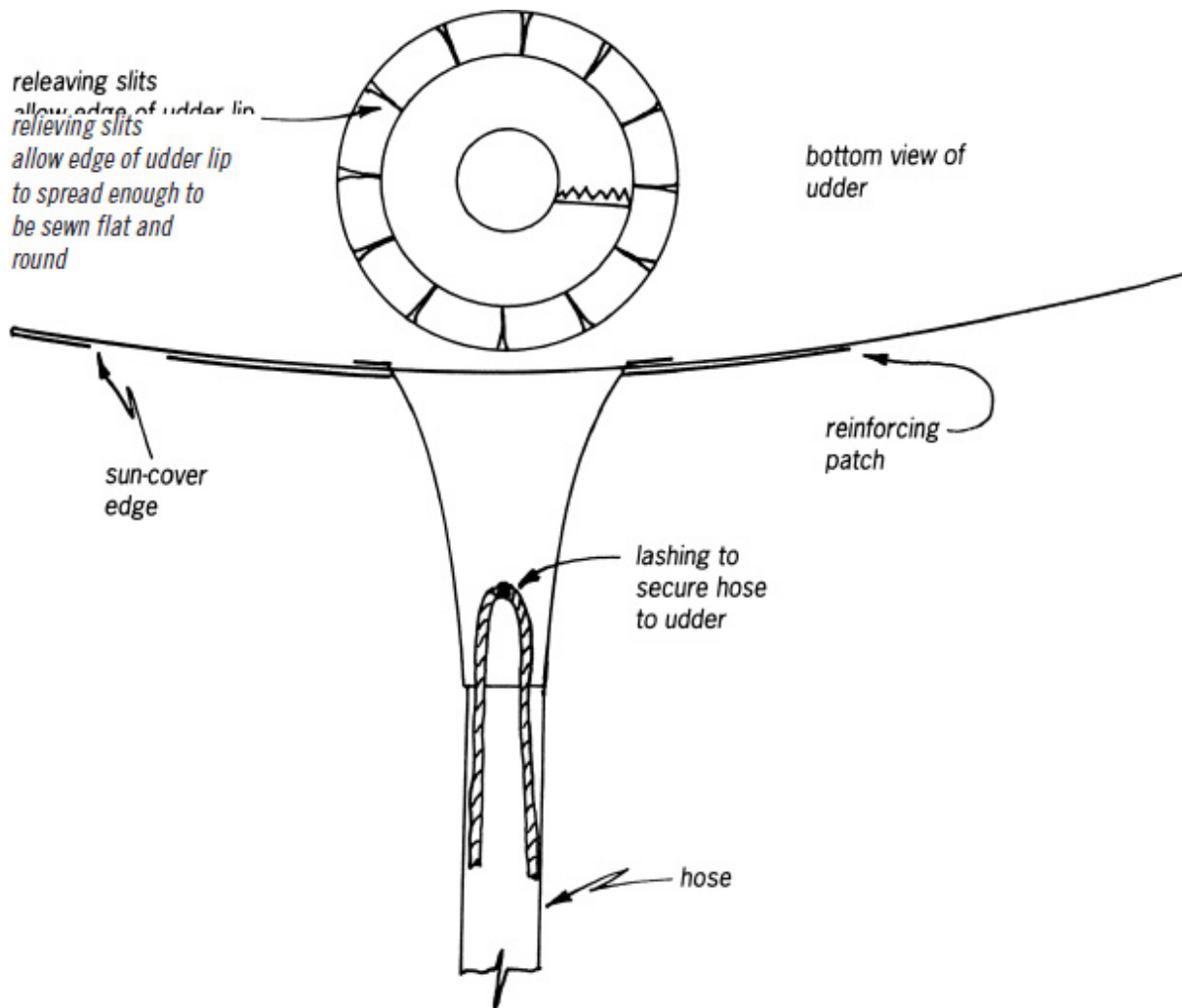


Figure 27.4

WIND SCOOPS

Probably the most effective piece of boat-cooling equipment you can carry is a galley sail or wind scoop. This fabric contraption catches each breeze and directs it through your hatch into the cabin.

There are several commercially made windscoops available, but most of them are too large and too complicated. They also have wood or metal spreaders and positioners which knock and beat against hatch coamings in a 10-knot breeze. The scoop we came to depend on has no solid parts and folds to the size of a T-shirt.

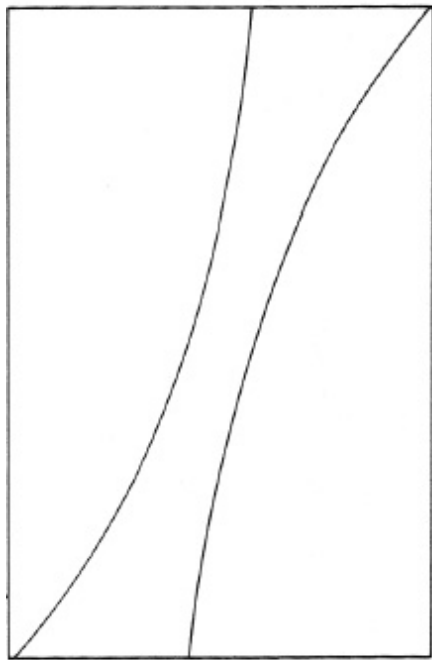
We made a 4-foot-tall, semi-flat spinnaker out of unbleached muslin or very soft, lightweight nylon. At the head and one foot down each luff of the wind scoop, there are small grommets with six feet of Dacron line permanently spliced in place. These lines are tied to the forestay and two shrouds. They can be switched to adjust the mouth of the scoop directly into the wind. The bottom of the scoop has a ¼-inch shock cord run through a strong hem. This snaps over the hatch coamings. We had a snap at each corner of our coaming for a hatch cover. This is enough to keep the scoop in place. Four small hooks at the corners of your hatch will serve this same purpose.

This simple scoop sends an amazing amount of air into the cabin. Even in the deep tropics we found the bunk in the forepeak, directly under the wind scoop, cooler at night than the bunk out on deck. During our summertime run down the Red Sea, we found we could keep the wind scoop in place even while we sailed. Since we were running, we oriented the mouth aft. It didn't interfere with sail changes at all. Even in 110-degree (Fahrenheit) temperatures the wind scoop breeze made cooking below possible.

In harbor you'll get the best out of your scoop if you lay at anchor where cooling breezes can reach you unobstructed by other boats and buildings. Since sailboats will usually lay bow into the wind you won't have to adjust your scoop for each wind shift.

Best of all, if you secure the scoop holding lines with a round turn, two half hitches and a running bight, getting it down and out of the way is simple. Just jerk on three lines, unsnap the shock cord and toss the wind scoop down the hatch. It won't scratch or mar anything.

Cutting out a simplified wind scoop



A piece of fabric $1\frac{1}{2}$ yards long by 36 inches wide will yield a four-foot tall wind scoop

To finish the wind scoop, seam up the center, turn up the bottom edge, and insert shock cord. To finish the wind scoop, seam up the center, turn up the bottom edge, and insert shock cord, then tie six-foot lines to each grommet. There is no need to turn over the luffs of the scoop if they are formed by the selvage of the fabric.

Figure 27.5

PORT SCOOPS

There is another way to direct cooling air into your cabin: with plastic port scoops. You'll see these in the portholes of large commercial ships, usually in the form of cut-out buckets. If you have round port lights, your job is easy. Find a deep plastic container that will just jam into the openings. Cut away most of the part that faces forward but leave the bottom of the container intact. For square or rectangular ports you'll have to try plastic bread-loaf containers or other types of storage boxes.



What is especially nice about these scoops is that they can be left in place when it rains. They'll deflect water away from your port light but invite the cooling breeze in. In the Puget Sound where nighttime rains and hot weather come at the same time, the breeze these scoops provide will help you avoid that muggy, closed-in feeling.

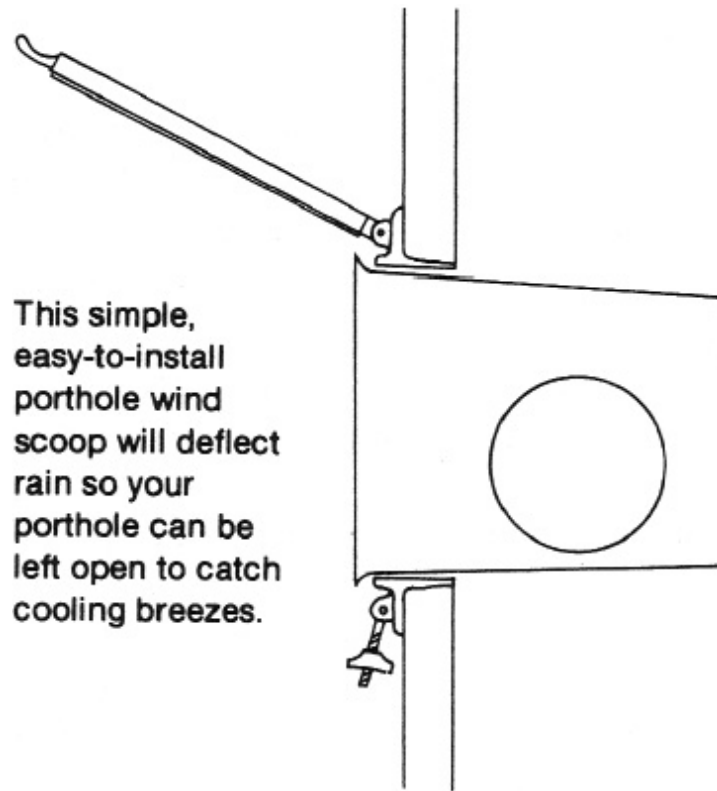


Figure 27.6

SUMMER SLIPCOVERS

A final summer-cooling idea we discovered, due to necessity in Malaysia's hot sticky climate, was simple cotton slipcovers for all of our cockpit cushions. These are tailored sacks of soft, dark-colored, washable, pure cotton which slide snugly over the cushions we use most. They secure in place with a drawstring.

We have two sets so we feel free to use them on our cockpit cushions. The slipcovers turn the stickiest plastic-covered cushion into a luxurious seat or mattress. They are easy to wash, so salt-water bathing suits are no problem.

With these slipcovers we can have the maintenance advantages of synthetic leather-like-cushion covers—waterproof, long-lasting, and stain-resistant, plus the luxury of soft, non-sticky, non-sweaty fabrics for hot days in port.



SECTION VII

Cruising Isn't Easy

Many sailors dream of setting off into what they perceive of as the perfect world of ocean voyaging. “Once this boat is complete, outfitted, and I’ve got cruising funds set aside for three years, my problems will be over,” they tell themselves. It’s most often these sailors who return to the safety offered by the regularity of a shoreside life within five or six months.

A cruising life is challenging, interesting, full of variety, sometimes exciting, and sometimes frightening—but it’s rarely easy. The most difficult problems come about because services you took for granted when you lived in a shoreside community are now luxuries or a frustrating maze of unfamiliarity.

The following chapters will give you an idea of some of the challenges you may encounter. Set out prepared for language difficulties, business problems, and shoreside confusion caused by new customs, and you may find it’s all a challenge that makes cruising even more interesting. But don’t expect frustrations, delays, difficult decisions, and confusion to end when you wave good-bye to your old friends and finally head out to sea.

The Curse of Cruising



“It must be wonderful to wander about like you do—no cares, no worries.”

I guess our cruising life must look that way to outsiders, but sometimes I think we’ve exchanged the complex problems of shore life for a whole new set of nuisances that are all the more frustrating for their outwardly simple appearance. We are constantly having to add items to our when- we- get-to-a-bigger-port shopping lists, knowing we can’t just run out to familiar stores to find what we want or need; packages with vital post or parts get lost in transit since we don’t have a set address. And, just like any shore-based family, once every week or so, we—like all cruisers—end up with a great big bag of dirty clothes. But unlike most homes, ours rarely have a washing machine.¹ Not only that, each gallon of water we use must be carried or transferred from shore, or requires fuel to produce it via an onboard watermaker. So we have to think twice about doing our washing by hand on board and just hanging it out to dry. The corner laundrette would be the most obvious solution, but in 60 percent of the off-the-beaten-track ports we love to spend our time in, they don’t exist. That’s why we’ve come to call laundry the curse of cruising.

Salt water just doesn't do the trick. Soap doesn't foam up. Clothes washed in salt always dry stiff, and the minute they get near water again they feel damp. Underwear washed in salt water soon creates a rash on sensitive skin. So even on longer ocean passages we save our laundry until we get ashore.

Soon after we entered a new harbor, if there were any other yachts at anchor, Larry and I used to sail by and hail the crew. After the happy greetings we'd ask, "Any laundromats nearby?" We always seemed to get a reply such as, "There's a lady in the green house next to the post office who does laundry." I used to grab at the chance to have the "lady in the green house" scrub my dirty clothes, but a few odd experiences did make me a bit more cautious than I was as a novice cruiser.



For us on a cruising budget it was devastating.

In Cabo San Lucas the crews of several large sportfishing charter boats suggested a washing woman I'll call Anna. "Is she expensive?" I asked. They assured me she wasn't. I asked Anna how much my 20-pound bag of laundry would cost. "Not very much, I only charge for the time your laundry takes." Two days later I picked up the scrubbed, dried, ironed, and

folded clothes back—with a bill for US\$94. That might not have seemed high for a charter boat that charged \$1,500 a night, but for us on a cruising budget it was quite painful.

I learned from that. I asked for an exact price before I turned any more laundry over.

In Guaymas, Mexico, it rained twice each day. I finally gave up my attempts to dry my laundry and asked a taxi driver if he knew a someone who could help me. “Yes, I do. My sister. Come with me.” I rode through the hills of Guaymas, over rutted roads full of puddles, chickens, and children. “This taxi ride alone is going to cost me a fortune,” I said to myself. My taxi driver spoke with his sister and then told me, “For 200 pesos your laundry will be done and I’ll deliver it to you.” I agreed immediately, for the equivalent of US\$12 seemed a very fair price. Sure enough, the next day my laundry arrived on the quay. “My sister had to hang your things around her fire to dry.” I could tell. For the next few weeks we walked around perfumed with the aroma of pine smoke.



This taxi ride alone is going to cost me a fortune.

When we sailed in to anchor in Neiafu, Tonga, on board *Taleisin* a local man rowed out and offered a fair price to do our laundry. The two bags came back minus several tee shirts and seven pair of fancy French lace

knickers I'd treated myself to in Papeete. At the urging of local people who were tired of this same man ripping off visiting sailors, I went to the police. I got the tee shirts back, but the con-artist had already given my knickers to his girlfriend (unknown to his wife until this incident). The resulting uproar was the talk of this small town.

Not all of our laundry experiences have been negative. After cruising for more than 30 years together, Larry decided to take charge of the laundry. We sailed in to Haybridge Basin on the Thames estuary after a summer in Norway. The October weather had turned cold. Our laundry overflowed the hamper locker. Larry headed off along the tow path, fronting the basin on one of our folding bikes, the sailbag full of dirty laundry strapped onto the luggage rack. I couldn't imagine where he'd find a launderette as my map showed only tiny villages nearby. He returned an hour later to say, "Laundry will be ready tomorrow afternoon." He'd simply peddled along until he saw an older woman hanging clothes out in her garden. "Do you know anyone who would like to earn a few pounds?" he'd asked. The next afternoon he brought the clean, dry, and folded laundry back, along with a tin box of freshly baked scones, all for the modest price he'd negotiated.

But this incident was not the norm. When we let other people do our laundry as we cruised we encountered overcharges, missing socks and bikini tops, clothes pounded on rocks till the colors came out, voyages delayed for a day or two while waiting for the last towels. Then you figure the time it takes to carry your laundry to town, find a washing lady, return to pick it all up, pay for it, and then carry it back to the boat again. Over the years we came to the conclusion that unless there was a coin laundry within walking distance, unless the laundress came with recommendations, it was easier financially and time-wise to find a local water tap and do our own.

To get really clean clothes, Larry and I worked together. First, I separated our colors and whites. I put the white clothes in a bucket of fresh water with soap and a bit of bleach and let the bucket sit in the sun for a full day. The next day the two of us would take everything ashore along with a soft bristle brush, liquid soap, and two buckets. I scrubbed a rock or plank clean and then proceeded to scrub each piece of laundry with the brush,

adding water and an environmentally sound brand of liquid soap to my heart's content. Larry pitched in, rinsing each piece five or six times and then wringing it out. Clad in a bikini, sun beating on my back, and chatting about life with someone willing to share the work, I came to view even this chore as pleasant. We returned to the boat to string our laundry from the lifelines, putting on extra clothespins if there were any breeze at all.

A friend of ours with a larger yacht and two nap-aged children used a 20-gallon pail with a secure top. She filled her pail halfway with clothes, soap, and water and then lashed it on the stern deck as she headed out to sea. The motion of the boat would agitate the clothes for twelve or twenty-four hours and a quick rinse in the next port would finish the laundry off. But if she was harbor-bound for a week, she too was reduced to handwashing.

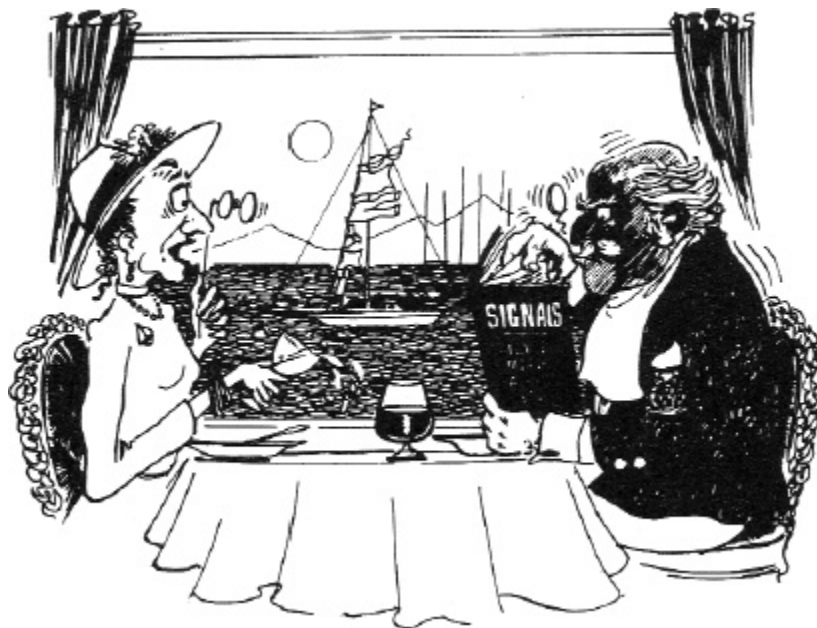
On board 29-foot *Taleisin*, we had the luxury of a small sitz-tub. It is situated so that it can be easily accessed from both the lazarette and main cabin. If we happened to be anchored near an easy supply of fresh water, this helped resolve the laundry problem. Ten gallons of water in the bottom of the tub, plus some soap, and I'd work at one end of the tub agitating and scrubbing the clothes, Larry working at the other wringing and laying the clothes in the cockpit. Then I'd drain the soaping water and add ten gallons of fresh clean water for a good rinse out. Together we'd hang everything along the lifelines to dry and were guaranteed fresh-smelling, clean-looking, if not exactly spot-free, clothes.

Most of our cruising friends agree about choosing sheets, towels, even clothes for life afloat. It is impossible to keep white things white without the aid of a good washing machine and hot water. They soon look grey. So most of us use beige, light blue, or green linens and clothes. They may not be as sparkly as they would look if they were washed ashore properly, but at least they don't look dingy.²

We try to show respect when we are moored at a yacht club or marina by not flying our laundry after noon. We do this since many of the clubs who so kindly offer their facilities to us serve lunches to their members. A

yacht dressed with flags presents a beautiful sight, but my undies and dish towels aren't quite so elegant.

Taking care of laundry on a cruise is a real nuisance. Even in the tropics where only a bikini is necessary, dish towels, sheets, and pillow cases constantly fill the laundry bag. But it's a small price to pay for the thrill of new landfalls, sunny shores, and a fine sailing breeze.



We are especially careful if the marina has a café overlooking the berths.

1 Among the cruising fleet I have been part of the past year (2019) are half a dozen larger boats with washing machines on board. In every case, the owners said they only used their own machines when they had no other choice due to the very high electrical demand. One carried a separate portable generator just to power the washing machine when they were not attached to shore power.

2 For some very good laundry tips visit theboatgalley.com/tag/laundry/

29

Cruising, Guns, Pirates, and Thieves



When Larry and I set off as new-to-cruising sailors on board *Seraffyn* back in 1968, we carried a Lee Enfield .303 and a .22-caliber revolver. Larry's father had given us his old rifle, suggesting we might need it for protection against unwelcome boarders. A boat-building friend insisted we take the handgun as a gift, to protect ourselves in the wilds of Mexico. During the year and a half we spent wandering around the Sea of Cortez and along the western coast of Mexico we only once made use of the rifle—and that was when Larry decided to teach me to shoot holes in tin cans on an isolated beach.

Near the end of the Mexican phase of our cruise, we arrived in Acapulco to hear a story that made us rethink our relaxed attitude towards carrying guns on board. A cruising couple had anchored for the day near a secluded bay in an area known as “Mexico's Wild West” halfway between Mazatlan and Acapulco. Three fishermen brought their workboat alongside to trade some fish for a few cans of beer. The conversation turned to hunting and soon the couple got out their shotgun and joined their new-

found friends on shore. As evening fell, the local fishermen, who had no firearms of their own, built a campfire then began roasting some fish and drinking beer, which they generously shared with their guests. As the evening wore on the wife, who understood Spanish quite well, heard one of the fishermen suggest taking the rifle, then holding her and her husband while his compatriots rowed out to burgle their yacht. She whispered this information to her husband who suggested they not make any fuss but just get up and leave. When the woman stood up to leave, the Mexicans jumped her husband while she ran into the bush. In the ensuing struggle, the rifle went off and the American man was shot through the neck. The bullet lodged against his spine. The fishermen ran for their own boat and headed directly out to sea. The woman was able to get her husband on board, then sailed to Acapulco for medical help. He survived, and was able to leave the hospital after three weeks in intensive care. The police found and arrested the culprits. They also instructed each port captain to warn new cruising arrivals, including us, “Do not carry a gun among people you don’t know. Don’t drink with people you’ve just met.” This incident started us wondering: could our own weapon be turned against us to rob, wound, or kill us?

Two years later in Cartagena, Colombia, where over 74 percent of the work force was unemployed and burglary was therefore rampant, we met the chief of police who took a real fancy to *Seraffyn*. While we lay at anchor in the beautiful, secluded lagoon behind his office, we asked him about defending ourselves with our rifle. His comments gave us more food for thought, “Are you trained to handle a firearm in a really tense situation? Are you prepared to kill someone? Can you make that decision really quickly? Because when you confront an armed burglar with your rifle, he’s got to shoot you because you may kill him. So if he kills you you’ve wasted your life for some material possessions. If, on the other hand, you kill him, you’ll spend months straightening out the bureaucratic problems which could include spending time in jail yourself. Then you might find you’ve killed the father of four children who were close to starvation—a man who was looking for any possible way to feed them. It’s better to hide your

valuables under the engine or someplace where no one will find them and hand any burglar a few interesting items or stand anchor watch if you are worried.”

We left Cartagena bound for Jamaica and there our gun debate was settled. The customs and immigration officials in Kingston Town were warm and welcoming until they asked us, “Do you have any firearms on board?” We showed them our rifle (we’d legally sold the handgun in Costa Rica) and their attitude toward us changed immediately. They insisted we fill out pages of special forms relating to the purpose of our firearms and stating we would forfeit our vessel if we sold the rifle or it was stolen during our time in Jamaica. If it was used by someone else to commit a crime we were told we would be legally liable. Then they locked up the rifle in a locker which they proceeded to plaster with big paper seals. Furthermore, they informed us, should we like to visit any other anchorages or ports, we had to return to Kingston Town for onward clearance before our departure and, once cleared, we had to head directly offshore. So instead of being able to cruise leisurely downwind, exploring interesting anchorages along the way then getting outward clearance in a more westerly port like Montego Bay, we would have to beat all the way back to Kingston Town. Two weeks after our arrival in Kingston, we realized one of the pieces of gear we needed to have repaired happened to be sealed in the same locker as the rifle. The officials resented the inconvenience of having to come out and open the sealed locker, then reseal it again. That is the only time in all our years of voyaging and delivering yachts when we were the victims of obvious resentment from customs officials. In reflection, it is understandable as no other kind of tourist carries weapons when he/she visits a foreign country. Our rifle was a threat to their country and a nuisance to them. It was a nuisance to us too, and when we reached the United States, we sold it.

Several years later, in the Philippines, Peer Tangvald sailed into Manila harbor and moored his 50-foot engineless gaff-schooner, *L’Aretmis de Pytheas*, 100 yards away from us. We quickly became friends. Within a few days, Peer’s wife Lydia, a spunky, attractive twenty-six-year-old French

girl, and I were out shopping together. Our conversation turned to pickpockets. Lydia opened her purse and showed me the revolver she carried with her whenever she left the boat, and kept next to their bunk on board.

It was about six months later that we read a letter Peer wrote to the Seven Seas Cruising Association. In it he recounted how, soon after our time together in Manila, he and Lydia, with their three-year-old son Tomas, were sailing south through the Sulu Sea bound for Borneo when a rough-looking fish boat motored alongside. Lydia wanted to fire a warning shot. Peer told her not to get the revolver since the approaching vessel might be manned by fishermen who wanted to trade for some whiskey. Peer also believed that if the men on the approaching vessels were pirates, compliance would be the best tactic. Unknown to Peer, Lydia went below, got her gun, and climbed out the forehatch. When the motorboat came alongside, Lydia shouted, then shot off her gun. A shot was immediately returned from the wheelhouse. Lydia fell overboard dead. After that, the intruders did board *L'Aretmis de Pytheas* and took Lydia's gun which lay on the deck plus the small amount of cash Peer had on board and some dishes. They left Peer and Tomas to sail on in the light breeze. When we read Peer's story, we were left wondering if the boarders had been fishermen looking for a handout or thieves startled into their murderous act by Lydia's aggression.

Soon after we launched *Taleisin*, we became involved in rescuing a boat that had been caught up in a double murder in Baja California. The escaped American convicts first stole a dinghy then rowed to an anchored yacht crewed by a husband and wife. They climbed on board unnoticed, entered the cabin, and grabbed the wife. They then threatened her if she didn't get her husband to hand over any weapons they might have hidden away on board, saying, "You are Americans—of course you have a gun somewhere here." It so happened there was a weapon on board. Fearing for his wife's life, the husband unscrewed the cover to his well-hidden locker and handed over the gun. It was promptly used to kill him. The boarders forced the wife to help them start the engine and pull up the anchor gear.

She was able to escape by diving overboard as the murderers tried to evade the local authorities by taking the boat to sea. We were left wondering if both the wife and husband would have survived had there been no gun on board.¹

This particular story came up during an evening with a group of other voyagers and led to a wide-ranging discussion about guns. One of the more experienced cruisers in the discussion stated, “If you register your gun with the officials when you enter port and they take it and lock it up until you leave, pirates or thieves will know for sure you are unarmed. If you hide your gun and deny having one on board and the officials search and find it, kiss your boat good-bye.”²

I was reminded of this comment recently when an American yachtsman was jailed, his partner hospitalized, and the boat impounded near Auckland, New Zealand. He had not declared his weapons on entry at Opuha, the northernmost port in New Zealand. Customs officials had searched his boat, but checked only for prohibited fresh produce and meat. A few months after arriving, while cruising southward, the couple began drinking, then arguing. The disagreement escalated. A handgun came out, a scuffle ensued, and the gun went off accidentally. Due to intervention from the wounded partner, plus the US State Department and other yachtsman, the owner was allowed to keep his boat. But he spent several months in jail and paid a substantial fine. When he was released from prison he was given one week to leave the country. Besides the obvious troubling nature of this story, it also sadly reflects another problem with guns: according to US statistics, up to 25 percent of gun fatalities are family members killed accidentally or during domestic altercations.

So what about defending yourself against pirates, the main reason cruising people give for carrying weapons? Prudent sailors can easily avoid those areas where recently confirmed evidence of pirating exists. The area around the Horn of Africa and Socotra have always been known for piracy. When we sailed down the Red Sea many years ago, we were warned to avoid Djibouti and stay well clear of Socotra. After some horrific reports from this same area in the last decade, the majority of yachtsmen have

chosen to either sail south around Africa, ship their boats up the Red Sea, join large convoys, or hire highly trained professional guards. But in all cases sailors are warned they should not depend on weaponry, even if they are able to carry it on board, as they would surely be outgunned and outmanned by any modern-day pirates.³

Many cruising websites and forums list areas where piracy may be a problem. If, when you enter a new country, you ask officials about potentially risky anchorages, most will provide good information as to safety and security risks. Don't discount fair warning by local officials. In Manila we had been warned by the harbor master and immigration officials that there was deep unrest among the Moros of the Sulu Sea. We were advised against sailing in this area unless we requested and stayed with a Philippine military escort. Sadly, Peer and Lydia were sitting at the table with us when we were told this, but they still chose to sail through this same area to save time on their cruise towards Borneo.

Don't rely on old information to plan your cruise since danger areas do change. Pirate situations change with the political climate. Places we once avoided, like the south of the Adriatic Sea, especially around Albania, are now on the regular cruising itinerary. We chose to avoid the Caribbean islands and especially Trinidad during the early 1970s due to political unrest in several small island countries. When we delivered a boat through the same area in later years our reception was delightful.

Petty thieves are more of a problem by far than pirates, but here current information from other cruising people and from folks you meet on shore, plus simple, logical preventative measures are far more useful than a gun. Until we were able to determine the situation in a new anchorage or harbor, we locked the boat securely while we went ashore the first time. In harbors such as Tangiers and in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where thievery is a way of life, unless we were in a guarded marina we stood anchor watch with a high-powered spotlight close at hand. In harbors where only occasional robberies have been known to take place, we'd clear movable items off the decks, leave a radio on, and burn a lamp below while we went ashore so would-be visitors would think someone was on board or returning shortly.

In little villages where we didn't know any locals to ask, we almost always locked our dinghy and oars to a tree or lamp post so they couldn't be borrowed. We were careful to avoid flaunting large amounts of cash or wearing any jewelry other than the simplest shell or bead necklaces in places where the locals were especially poor.

Simple measures can help you avoid having gear go missing from your boat. In areas prone to theft, hoist your tender out of the water each evening. Take the outboard off the stern rail and put it below decks; don't leave it hanging there, looking tempting. Clear any easily removable gear off the deck and minimize the appearance of antennae which would suggest you have lots of fencible electronic gear which could be fodder for thieves. Don't be seen handling large amounts of cash on shore. If you do carry more than a small amount of cash on board, separate it out into two or three separate stashes and store these in various parts of the boat. If a thief should come on board and find one hoard of cash, he will usually not search for more.

And what about self-defense? If a thief happens to come on board while you are in your bunk, what do you do to defend yourself? A self-defense specialist with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police suggests: "Keep a can of pepper spray or bear spray near your bunk. Though in some countries this may be considered illegal, the worst-case scenario is, customs officials will confiscate it. We have never heard of anyone being detained because they used pepper spray in self-defense. Should a burglar enter your boat, spray will help you immobilize him without endangering yourself or possibly killing another human being. In a scuffle in close confines, you are just as likely to get hurt by your own gun as the thief is.

Some of my cruising friends who venture into less visited parts of the world such as up the rivers of the Ivory Coast and along the Amazon River,⁴ where the apparent wealth of their yacht presents a temptation for far poorer local fishermen, have installed motion sensors on deck. Movement such as a boat coming close alongside sets off a blinding display of lights, or a barrage of horns. One incident and the word gets out to other potential thieves. It is the electronic version of the tacks Joshua Slocum

spread on his decks to deter the curious natives he encountered in the canals near Tierra del Fuego more than 100 years ago.

During 47 years afloat, Larry and I cruised to more than 70 countries. We sailed down the Red Sea, where most pirate stories originate, and to the Philippines, Sri Lanka and many other Southeast Asian ports. We explored many parts of South America, including the coast of Brazil from Buzios right down to Argentina, and into the Chilean canals. We spent almost a year and a half exploring the African coastline and spent seven months venturing inland through five south African countries, all without carrying firearms.

In all that time, the only threatening gun incident happened while we were on shore in Southern California building *Taleisin*.⁵ As for theft, we stopped in more than 400 ports and anchorages all around the world yet only locked our companionway a few dozen times. We had only four thefts, two of which were due to our own carelessness. The two almost identical thefts—the ones we could not have prevented—happened first in Mexico and later in Spain, when we left our dinghy unattended on a beach and returned to find someone had cut off the painter. In Italy we lost two sailing jackets when we carelessly left them sitting in the dinghy alongside the fishing dock and walked into town for a long leisurely lunch. The final theft was the only real nuisance. We'd anchored in an out-of-the-way village on the south end of Penang, Malaysia. We didn't lock the boat up as we only planned to row our guests ashore then return to immediately to the boat. They invited us out for dinner and we stayed until after dark. We returned to find our own dinghy had been used to row out to the boat where the thieves took the 2019 equivalent of US\$2,000 worth of cameras, \$300 worth of jewelry, and two jackets. If we'd locked either *Seraffyn* or the dinghy this wouldn't have happened. (The police recovered the cameras and my jacket.) A gun would not have prevented this incident—but a bit of care would have.

For the past year and a half, I have been sailing with David, who is an Australian. His experience as he explored the coastlines of the world and traveled on foot or by bus far from the coast in less traveled areas such as

Turkey, Romania, and later all along the length of South America during an 11-year circumnavigation, was the same: no threats, and his only experience with theft being the loss of a dinghy and outboard when he did not lock them to a wharf in England. He has never given any thought to needing a gun on board. “It seems to be an American thing. My feeling is, you can replace material things, not lives,” he commented when this discussion came up.

In the end, it comes down to this: if you are so worried about pirates and thieves that you feel you need a gun for protection, maybe you shouldn’t be out cruising. There is little evidence to suggest that you will be safer with firearms on board. And if I compare the life Larry and I led for more than forty years to that of friends who have lived more “normal” shore-based lives, my opinion still holds: cruising appears to be the safer route. Especially if you avoid disturbed areas, use a bit of caution, and present a warm, non-gun-toting attitude toward the people whose country you’ve come to visit.

1 See *Capable Cruiser* for the complete story of this incident.

2 Canadian, Antipodean, and European sailors are far less likely to consider carrying firearms on board than Americans. According to the New Zealand customs officials I contacted for the third edition of *Self-Sufficient Sailor*, only one out of twelve non-American yachtsmen declared firearms when entering New Zealand this past season while approximately 30 percent of American sailors declared their on-board weapons. Surveys carried out by several cruising clubs and online forums indicate more than 40 percent of American cruisers carry firearms on board.

3 For current information on potential piracy hotspots look at noonsite.com or maritime-connector.com/wiki/piracy/. It is interesting to note that the piracy hotspots shown on maritime-connector are little changed over the past 50 years.

4 It was on the Amazon River that the late Sir Peter Blake was shot and killed by pirates. Peter was on an environmental exploration trip in South America, monitoring global warming and pollution for the United Nations. The two-month expedition was anchored off Macapá, Brazil, at the mouth

of the Amazon delta, waiting to clear customs after a trip up the Amazon River. At around 9 p.m. a group of six to eight armed, masked robbers wearing balaclavas and crash helmets boarded the 75-foot *Seamaster*. As one of the robbers held a gun to the head of a crewmember, Blake sprang from the cabin wielding a rifle. He shot one of the assailants in the hand before the rifle malfunctioned; he was then fatally shot in the back by assailant Ricardo Colares Tavares. The boarders injured two other crew members with knives, and the remaining seven were unhurt. The only thing seized by the attackers was a 15-horsepower outboard motor and some watches from the crew. Authorities eventually captured the pirates and sentenced them to an average of 32 years in prison each; Tavares, the man who fired the fatal shots, received a sentence of 36 years. Prior to the attack, the yacht's crew had been very careful when traveling up the river and back down again; they always had crew members on watch. Only upon return to Macapa did they relax their guard.

5 Recounted in *Bull Canyon, A Boatbuilder, a Writer and Other Wildlife*.

30

The Case against the Well-Planned Cruise



Cruising is for pleasure. So I am continually surprised by the number of people who spend months and even years getting ready to go, and then only a few months into their cruise decide to abandon their voyage. In La Paz, Baja California, I saw fully cruise-outfitted yachts with for sale signs on their lifelines. In Sydney, Australia, I noted the same. Here in New Zealand each season, a dozen or more yachts are put up for sale by disillusioned cruiser within weeks of arriving from a South Pacific crossing.

Long-distance, long-term cruising is a dream cherished by almost 80 percent of the people who purchase a yacht over 30 feet, according to recent surveys. What changes the dream to a nightmare?

After more than four decades of being deeply involved with cruising, I have concluded there are four relatively obvious reasons for an unsuccessful cruise: too little sailing experience, too large a vessel, over-complicated systems, or unexpected financial changes. Then there is a fifth, far less obvious reason: over-planning. It is a hidden danger that could dampen the pleasure you are looking for by setting off cruising.¹

Where are you going? Are you headed around the world? How long will it take? A person leaving on a cruise is asked these questions a thousand times. If he is new to cruising, he tries to answer, in detail, quite often saying, "I am sailing around the world." Then this newbie will lay out a week-by-week itinerary of dream destinations. But an experienced cruiser says merely, "I'm headed south. I've got six months free."

Cruising should be an antidote to the pressures of modern life. Why bring your pressures with you? Even on a limited cruise of two to four weeks, a schedule ruins the purpose of a cruise. No matter how big or small your goals, set as your ultimate goal one-half the distance you think you can cover, and if you have easy sailing and fair winds you'll have twice the time to enjoy the people and places along the way. If, on the other hand, you are delayed, be it due to foul winds or gear problems, no bother, because you've got lots of time.

Along your cruise, potentially interesting deviations will invariably present themselves. A carefully laid out plan, with promises to be in certain places by certain dates, means you have to pass these by. The most rewarding aspect of an unplanned cruise is the element of surprise that enters when you can say, "That island sure looks interesting. Let's stop." My 40-plus years of cruising was made into a wonderful adventure by our unforeseen destinations. One favorite was when Larry and I were headed for the Aran Isles on the west coast of Ireland. We planned to stop here for a few days then continue north around the top of this island nation toward the Outer Hebrides. The wind shifted to the north just as we were abeam the islands. This made the only good anchorage untenable. So we beat onward ten miles toward Carraroe which offered 360-degree protection. Two hours later, as we were short-tacking through the entrance, half a dozen rugged-looking, black-hulled gaff-rigged local boats came reaching around the islands to the west, then tightened up their sheets and began tacking toward the entrance. Soon after we anchored, so did the fleet of Galway Hookers (so called because their crew used hooks as opposed to nets to catch fish). We launched the dinghy and rowed over to have a closer look. Padraig O'Brian willingly answered all our questions, telling us his Hooker had been

owned by his family for four generations. Then he asked, “When you planning to sail onward?”

Larry piped up, “No plans. If we’re having a good time, might just hang around here all summer.”

“Then you’ll come racing with me tomorrow,” Padraig stated.

The next day we sailed to the small town of Callaghuigh six miles away in the next bay, surrounded by a fleet of Hookers skippered by people we’d come to know the evening before over a few too many Guinness and Bailey Irish Creams. We had a great day racing on board one of the oldest Hookers and later when Larry asked what made Padraig invite us along, he answered, “Usually when yachts stop here, folks on them seem to be in a rush, all trying to circumnavigate the Isles. They stay one night, leave the next morning. What’s the use of trying to get to know them?” We spent the next three months racing on board one or the other of the Hookers, sharing evenings of music and laughter in a dozen different pubs. *Taleisin* became a mascot while the fleet sailed from port to port, taking part in summer festivals all along the coastline of Galway County.



Because we avoided sticking to a schedule, we were able to spend almost two months sailing with the fleet of Galway Hookers.

The desire to do a circumnavigation seems to be built into almost everyone who sets off across their first ocean. But even if you are willing to be relaxed about your schedule as you cruise, it is still important to avoid telling folks you want to “sail around the world.” Any number of things can derail what is a huge commitment: family problems back home, financial changes, or—the best scenario—an interesting new scheme you want to try out. Several years ago when Larry and I were lazing away the hurricane season among the Azorean Islands we became friends with a couple on a handsome 42-footer. They had set off from the UK two years previously, spent a year exploring the rivers of Western Africa, then gone up the Amazon and through the Caribbean Islands and along the US Inter- Coastal Waterway. Now they had been offered a chance to take over a very creative

project back in the UK. “But I am already having to explain to people that our cruising dream didn’t fail—we had a great time and want to go back out again. But next time we won’t tell anyone our plans.”

There are those people who just don’t *enjoy* cruising once they start. After giving detailed plans to all the folks at home and arranging for dozens of friends to visit along the way, they find it impossible to turn back; too many expectations have been set up for their cruise. The owner of one large cruising yacht who had guests scheduled for a week each for a four-month voyage through the Pacific Islands told us his sad story. He hated cruising—couldn’t sleep well, got seasick, didn’t like fishing, was tired of the tropical heat and humidity—but he said, “I can’t disappoint all the people I’ve invited to join me. I’ll just have to stick it out.” I now wonder if the pressure of sticking to his schedule, and the constant demands of entertaining his guests, contributed to the reason he came to hate cruising.

Learning to cruise, getting used to your boat, deciding if it is the life for you: these are all stressful steps in the life of cruising. Structured guest lists can make it even more so. As much as you will want to share your cruise with friends and family, I’d suggest waiting until you have been underway for a few months and had a good shakedown period before issuing invitations. Even then, arranging to rendezvous with your visitors takes careful consideration or your stress levels will definitely rise and could taint everyone’s time together.

So what is a strategy that will make having guests less stressful? Not only unexpected deviations from your original cruising plans but bad weather, illness, and clearance problems can be schedule-ruiners. It’s nerve-racking to try to meet a friend in Motril, Spain, on Friday when you are still holed up in Gibraltar on Wednesday waiting for an easterly gale to lay down. Larry and I tried this once. It ruined a big chunk of our summer. After that experience, whenever we had guests joining us we determined which country, or which general cruising area we would be in when they had holiday time. We suggested they purchase airline tickets to an airport that was relatively central and with easy bus or train connections to nearby port cities. We also asked that they consider their visit with us as just one of the

reason they were flying to a new country and plan some excursions they would do on their own. Then four days before they left their home, we told them exactly where we would be waiting, along with suggested ways they could get from the airport to our location. Meanwhile, we had time to explore the area a bit and find a special place to be waiting. Once, it was in a secluded Scottish loch with a tiny ancient pub. Our friends flew up from Cornwall, then spent three days exploring Edinburgh before boarding a bus that dropped them right at the door of the pub. When we were cruising Long Island Sound with an autumn destination of Annapolis on the Chesapeake Bay, we suggested Gillian and Phil Slater, British friends who wanted to join us, fly in to BWI, the Baltimore airport. Ten days before their arrival we set sail south from Block Island to Norfolk, Virginia. Once anchored there we called them then relaxed and caught up with a bit of maintenance. When they arrived, Gill and Phil had no trouble finding us and together we cruised leisurely north, knowing we could easily get them back to their homebound flight from almost anywhere along our route. This plan worked many times through the years. Our guests seemed to enjoy it too. The excitement of not knowing exactly where they would be meeting us, nor where they would be cruising, made an adventure of each visitor's holiday.

Planning, and/or keeping to a schedule: this is probably what made you successful enough to acquire a cruising boat then outfit it and find the freedom to set off sailing. But now you are actually heading off, it pays to change your mindset. Learn to avoid tight schedules, leave yourself open to changing your destinations, and create a strategy that makes meeting up with your guests a treat, not a trial. Then, when your friends and family come to join you, they'll get a calm, non-hassled greeting which will prove that you really are living your dream.

1 I do not list health or family problems here as these are beyond any cruiser's control. The majority of people who have to sell their boat for these reasons tell me they enjoyed their voyage. Many hope to go out again if possible.

31

The Wave that Was Waiting for Bill Bailey



“Have you ever wanted to chuck it all in, give up cruising and move ashore?” I’ve been asked this question more than once when I happened to meet someone who had just dropped anchor after a rough passage. Looking back over nearly 49 years and 209,000 miles of voyaging which did include several really difficult passages, I can only remember one time when, even after a few nights in a secure anchorage, I wondered if I wanted to sail onward. I’ve never before written about this event, not because I was trying to hide the fact that I almost lost my enthusiasm for voyaging, but because it was almost unbelievable.

Dusk was slowly gathering when we arrived off the breakwaters leading into Mooloolaba, a laidback resort town just 150 miles south of Australia’s Great Barrier Reef. Near exhaustion, I was eager to be in a secure berth, and ready for a good night’s sleep—and a doctor. To say the previous seven days of sailing had been difficult would be to downplay the worst storm Larry and I had encountered in all our years together.¹ Added to the unexpectedness and severity of the out-of-season 60-hour-long blow

was the fact that, during the storm, I'd sustained what turned out to be a torn muscle in my chest when I practiced flying in an enclosed space because I didn't secure the lee cloth on my berth. As soon as the storm winds abated to under 40 knots, though I assured him I was not in any immediate need of help and demonstrated this by gingerly getting out of the bunk and cooking up a hot (albeit simple) meal, Larry began hand-steering, urging *Taleisin* to windward. It took another day and a half to sight the haven of Mooloolaba, one we'd enjoyed visiting just four months previously. As we approached the coast the winds began easing back until late afternoon, when we finally had all plain sail set in the eight-knot breeze.

It was just before dark when we started tacking into Mooloolaba. Despite the now relative calm of our approach, the intimidating sight and sound of 10-foot storm-generated waves breaking against a long underwater sandbar just 100 feet inshore of our course was not reassuring. Nor was the two-knot outgoing current we encountered just as we reached the 250-foot-wide channel between the breakwaters. The thing that brought our progress to a halt, however, was the wind shadow created by a string of multi-story hotels cresting the hill just 1,000 feet inside the entrance. Try as we might, we couldn't make headway.

"Let's reach off a bit, heave to, and wait until the tide changes. What's another four hours after what you've already been through?" Larry suggested. And for the next two and a half hours we did just that, jiggling along under staysail and mainsail about half a mile off the breakwaters as dark descended.

In spite of the large swell, the motion was comfortable. Reinforced with painkillers from our medical kit, I cooked some dinner, disappointed that I wasn't enjoying the café meal I'd been envisioning. Then I tuned in the latest forecast. "Brisbane: storm imminent. Frontal system with gusts to 55 knots."

Larry gave me a hug and said, "Sky's still clear, 'imminent' can mean anything up to six hours. If the storm does arrive before we can tack into

Mooloolaba, we'll just reach out to deep water and wait it out." His words were still echoing in my ears when I heard someone yell, "Hey, matey!"

I climbed gingerly on deck. Approaching us from the direction of Brisbane I saw the running lights of a 30-foot catamaran. "You guys have a chart of this place? Ever been in here before?" the helmsman called.

"Yes, sailed out Mooloolaba about four months ago," Larry answered.

"Great, we expected to get here long before dark, but wind fell really light. Don't have a chart. How about turning on your engine and guiding us in since you know the way?"

The second man on *Bill Bailey* said, "Just our luck," when we informed them we were sailing engine-free. Then they drifted past us and out of earshot.

I sat on the cockpit coaming, trying not to imagine the wind was increasing, looking hungrily towards the breakwaters that offered such tempting shelter, when I noticed what looked like a breaking sea curling right around the point and across the entrance. "Larry, did you see that?" I asked. He reminded me of how tired I must be and said, "The lights from shore could definitely make it look like the inshore breakers were overlapping the breakwaters."

I watched intently for another ten minutes and became convinced I'd been imagining another problem where none existed. Then *Bill Bailey* came alongside again.

"How about we tow you in, and you direct us. We have got to get in 'cause we aren't set up for really heavy weather and there's some headed our way tonight."

"My wife thinks she saw breakers in the entrance," Larry called to them.

"Can't be," the helmsman on *Bill Bailey* replied. "Just got off the radio with the local coast guard. They said it's an all-weather entrance. Said it's all clear for us to head in right now. Come on, help us get in."

Larry turned to me. "What do you want to do, Lin? You know I'm not comfortable letting someone else be in control of our lives, never taken a tow with *Taleisin*—but it's up to you."

“I’m just too tired, Larry,” was all I had to say. I tried to turn away before he could see the tears of frustration that began rolling down my cheeks. Larry reached into the lazarette and got out a hundred-foot mooring line, then tossed the end to the crew on *Bill Bailey*. The crew man climbed to the back of *Bill Bailey* and secured the line around the main cross beam quite close to the seaward hull.

“Lin, I’ll leave the mainsail up to steady us because we’ll be beam on to the seas. I’ll drop the staysail, but leave it ready to go right back up. Be ready to sheet it in, ease the mainsail off completely, and bear away if I decide to cast off. Breeze should shove us right around and get us clear.”

Bill Bailey’s ten-horsepower outboard roared into life. Larry took three turns around the cathead on our windlass and stood on the foredeck, holding the bitter end of the towline. I stood with the tiller between my knees, chart in hand, as *Taleisin* began to glide smoothly through the rolling swell. Within minutes we’d directed *Bill Bailey* inshore of one sandbar and found the small buoy marking the inshore shoals. Now, with the leading lights lined up to guide us through the breakwaters, we both lay beam to the seas, feeling each new roller lift then settle then break into roaring foam against the rocks of the breakwater just a few dozen yards to leeward.

Seconds later it happened. Just as *Bill Bailey* was almost inside the protection of the breakwater, a wave came crashing across the entrance. Spray flew across our deck as it passed under us but I didn’t have time to think, let alone react, before the crest smashed into *Bill Bailey*. All I remember seeing was her seaward hull rising before my eyes. Then *Bill Bailey* lay capsized, her mainsail flat in the water, her hull high in the air, her mast only a dozen yards from the leeward breakwater.

Taleisin immediately lost her forward momentum and was almost dead in the water, the threatening inshore breakers seeming to crash within a boat length of where we lay. “Lin, get ready to sheet in,” Larry yelled as he prepared to let go of the towline. Before he could react, before he could release the line, a second breaker came roaring toward us. Once again it threw spray across our decks, but crested right against *Bill Bailey*. A wrenching jolt threw me off my feet and onto the cockpit sole. I looked

forward as Larry screamed, “I can’t believe it!” All I could see from my vantage point behind the cabin was a huge shower of spray as *Bill Bailey* was wrenched back upright throwing the water out of her mainsail with such force that it flew a hundred yards to windward.

“Are you alright?” I heard Larry yell. “Is your motor working?”

“Fuel line got pulled out,” was all I heard before the engine roared back into line. Then, above the roar of crashing waves, the most beautiful words in the Australian language rang clear, “She’ll be right, mate.”

For just a moment I lay frozen on the cockpit sole, stunned by the situation I’d led us into. Then I scrambled to my feet and prayed those words were true as I grabbed the tiller and *Taleisin* slowly gathered way.

Literally seconds later, both boats were in the smooth water inside the breakwater. And a few minutes after that *Bill Bailey*’s engine quit, and wouldn’t restart. But by then we had reached the turn into the mooring area. The water was smooth. Unimpeded by the buildings, the 6- or 8-knot breeze blew steadily on the beam and even the well shaken crew of *Bill Bailey* could laugh as Larry said, “Take our tow line forward, we’ll set some more sail and pull you in.”

As we quietly drifted toward the long pontoon in front of the yacht club, Larry called to the two men on *Bill Bailey*, “Really sorry we got you into that mess. If you hadn’t waited to tow us in you never would have been hit by that wave. Sure hope there isn’t too much damage.”

“Man, you saved our lives. Hadn’t been for your boat pulling us back upright, we’d have been in a heap of shit. That wave was just waiting for us. Just didn’t expect us to have someone to give a helping hand.”

The next morning Larry helped do a thorough survey of *Bill Bailey*. Her port hull, the one which went underwater, had taken on a lot of water. Everything in it was soaked including a radio that did not survive. But considering the abruptness of her capsize and re-righting, she suffered relatively little structural damage. Within three days Larry and the crew had repaired the two frames that were broken. I, on the other hand, went first to see a doctor then spent several hours that day and on the next few days sitting quietly in a nearby park, feeling exhausted and more than a bit

shaken. And I actually told Larry I had decided to give up cruising. “We’ve been doing it for almost 20 years now—maybe our luck is running thin,” I remember telling him. But several days of rest and warm understanding from Larry, plus several fun evenings with other cruising sailors who slowly trickled in to Moololaba with their own stories of the stormy weather, helped me put things more in perspective. Two weeks later I was eagerly filling up the locker with provisions for our 1,700-mile eastbound journey, plus good Aussie wine and treats for the group of cruising sailors who were waiting for us back at our home base in New Zealand.

Over the ensuing years, I have often reconsidered this strange event, trying to think of what we could have done to avoid it, what lessons we could learn from the experience. I can name half a dozen decisions that brought us to that exact spot at that exact time: our decision to rush back to New Zealand for a Christmas rendezvous which made us try to sail to a schedule; our impatience that made us sail into a storm because we felt we were tough enough to weather the 35-knot squalls predicted by the forecasters; our determination to have one last rendezvous with friends in Mooloolaba before sailing home (we could have headed right for New Zealand on a reach when the southeasterly winds of that storm first blew in). It was only as I began writing this that the lesson came clear. *Bill Bailey’s* skipper was right. At some time in every sailor’s life there will be a wave with their name on it. And, if you are fortunate, as Larry and I have been, there will be someone there to give you a helping hand.

1 It was fifteen years before we actually wrote about this storm, and then only at the insistence of Peter Bruce, who was creating a new edition of *Adlard Coles Heavy Weather Sailing*. You can read the full account in our *Storm Tactics Handbook*.



SECTION VIII

Cape Horn and Beyond—The Learning Never Stops

Years ago a reporter asked Larry, “How long you planning to do this?” He answered, “As long as it’s fun.” Now, as I look back over the past 55 years, of which I have spent almost 38 actually wandering the world under sail and seven more building the two boats Larry and I cruised on, I realize it was more than just the fun. I think what kept me enthusiastically involved was the constant learning required to face ever-changing situations, be they at sea, during the approaches to land, or in port. These lessons have served me well on shore, too. The chapters that follow illustrate many of these lessons, beginning with what I learned from the most daunting adventure of my sailing life and ending with the most challenging changes I have had to deal with.

Cape Horn to Starboard



“Hey Lin, wake up!” I hear Larry’s voice over my storm-tossed dream. “You wanted this chance, come and grab it.”

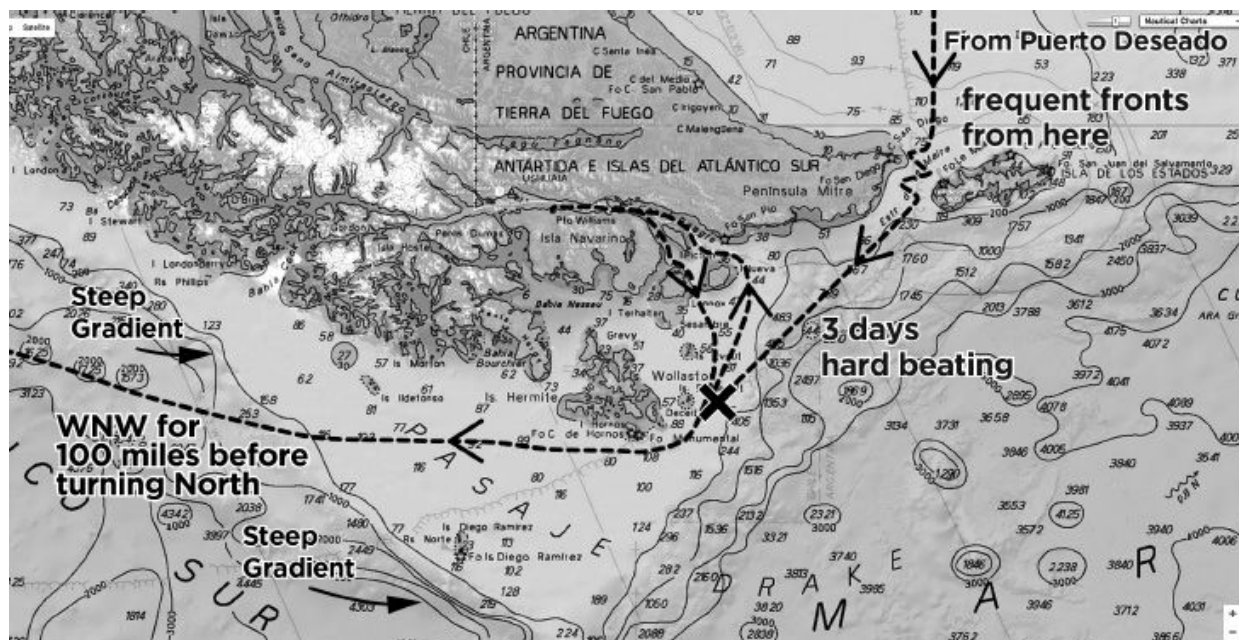
It takes my body and mind several minutes to coordinate sensory information before I realize my dream had not been far off the mark. We really were trying to bash our way past Cape Horn and into the Pacific. But now, instead of the body-jarring crash and lurch of a hard-driven sailboat fighting to gain weathering against storm force southwesterly winds, I barely feel any movement at all. Instead of dark of night and howl of wind, I hear rambunctious terns and see streams of glorious sunlight pouring through the open hatch. Had I dreamed the snow flurries, and frequent squalls? I climb clear of the thick sleeping bag and grab my denims then add two sweaters over the thermal inners I’d slept in.

All around me are signs of hard sailing. Every device we’d installed to keep gear securely inside lockers and under floorboards is fastened. Sponges sprout around the edges of dishes and spice jars, a sure sign Larry has been investigating quiet rattles as I slept. On the cabin sole, out of the path of traffic, a half dozen stray items have joined the basket of fruit, plus the cheese I kept handy to snack on because it had been too rough to cook.

“Were you serious about flying the nylon drifter at the Horn?” Larry calls. “You’ve got your chance. This light air can’t last long. Let’s grab it.”

I don’t waste a second. I’m out the companionway, gloves between my teeth, watch cap only half on, as Larry pulls the drifter bag from the lazarette. He laughs as I spin in a circle and almost miss the most significant landmark of our lives together. Then, he reaches out to hug me while he points, “There she is: Cape Horn to starboard.”

I am awestruck, afraid to say a word. Then I grab the sail and, wordlessly using the familiar routines of 37 years of sailing together, we get it flying as an 8-knot southeasterly breeze belies the legends surrounding this southernmost cape where, for 24 percent of the year, winds normally blow at Force 8 to 12, while 78 percent of all winds reported come from the westerly quadrant.



The cliff-like rise from depths of more than 4,000 meters to shoal waters in the approaches to the Drake Passage causes massive waves to form just south of Cape Horn. The X marks the spot where we abandoned our first attempt at doubling the Horn. After a month in the Beagle Canal, we returned to the exact spot and continued onward into the Pacific Ocean.

I search out our cameras plus a one-pound bag of confetti I've snuck on board. Windvane set, we frolic and throw bright colored bits of paper into the air then watch them drift slowly downwind toward the sparkling, sun-lit cliffs eight miles to the north. Photos snapped, I say, "Okay, now we have truly flown our nylon sail as we sailed west passed each of the great southern capes of the world. Time to get it down, before we blow it out."

"Why take it down?" Larry counters. "Barometer is steady; it's keeping us moving. We need every bit of speed we can get to beat this east-going current."

In spite of the near-freezing temperatures on deck I can't stay below as, for the next ten hours, *Taleisin* moves sedately westward over the graveyard of thousands of far less fortunate sailors. I throw chunks of bread to the albatross that glide around us and laugh at their clumsy landings, their forwardness as they paddle right up to *Taleisin's* side and look into the cockpit for more tidbits. Their massive hooked beaks, their elegant long wings bring to mind what I once read; each bird carries the soul of a Cape Horn sailor whose body lies beneath these icy waters.

I wonder what those professional seamen would have made of the fears that accompanied me for the past two years, the fear I still had as the southerly breeze freshens and we douse our drifter and set the working jib and staysail to leave the Horn astern and charge into the Pacific.

I now realize Larry always planned to "double the horn."¹ In 1977 when we were in Malta, preparing 5-ton *Seraffyn* for the rougher weather of the Red Sea, Larry said, "Next boat we build, no cockpit to fill with seas. Then we could take it anywhere, even round the Horn." I should have linked the clues, but it was almost four years before the next one popped up. "Yes, I want those two extra keel bolts. You can call it overbuilding. I call it insurance to make her strong enough for anything, even Cape Horn," Larry said as I helped him line up his long drill so the 17th and 18th bolts went straight and true through the bronze floors, teak keel timber, and lead.

After 3½ years of boat building, then 15,000 miles of Pacific voyaging, Larry convinced me to sail south of Tasmania, ostensibly as the logical route

to Western Australia. With careful weather planning and patience we found February gave us breezes light enough to fly our nylon drifter past Maatsuyker Island, and I ignored the next clue. “Do you realize we are only 700 miles north of the latitude of Cape Horn?” Larry mentioned as we passed westward into the Indian Ocean.

Cape Leewin, The Cape of Storms, Cape Hope—over the next years we sailed past each, encountering stormy weather to reach them, but nylon drifter weather as each cape lay on our beam. When we turned north toward Europe after twelve years of voyaging on *Taleisin*, I relaxed. I hadn’t heard Cape Horn mentioned in three years. Then in Norway Larry came back from chatting with a local sailor who had been hoarding charts of Patagonia. “He gave them to me. Says he’s too old to try it now. Fun to look at. Might be an interesting way to go home. Done Panama,” Larry commented nonchalantly. “Sure,” I snapped. “Go find yourself another crew and do it. Panama is fine with me.”

A year later he came across a copy of John Kretschmer’s book, *Cape Horn to Starboard*.² “He did it in a 32-foot Contessa, only half the weight of ours,” Larry told me. “Kretschmer says he didn’t have a lot of sailing experience. He got lucky with the weather. We could too. Let’s give it a try.”

As we explored the Eastern coast of the US from Maine to Virginia for three seasons, I talked of glamour the of Carnival in Trinidad and diving in the San Blas Islands near Panama, hoping to lure Larry into more rational plans.

Then I broke our cardinal rule. Haven and Monica Collins (née McCants) came to stay for the weekend. Sail designer and racing skipper, Monica had been captain of the first all-woman team to take part in a major ocean race, the Transpac. She was also the only woman on 80’ *Challenger* in the Round the World race and the first to take part in that event. Instead of keeping our plans to myself, I asked if she might consider crewing with Larry if he really wanted to go ahead with his Cape Horn Caper. “Cut the crap,” Monica said in her inimitable way. “Great boat; you’ve got lots of experience. You can do it.” As I listened to this woman who was young enough to be my daughter, I knew I *had* to give it a try.

“Larry, I’ll back you up on three conditions,” I said late one night. “First, we take it on as a serious expedition. We go over every single inch of this boat and upgrade everything we can think of. Second, we don’t tell anyone we’re trying to do it. That way, if we change our minds, no one will say we failed. Finally, if it is just too hard, if I begin to feel we are risking the boat, we turn and run for the Falklands and on to Africa.” His warm hug and firm assurances didn’t overcome my inner knowledge that I, with my over-active imagination (read: fear) and lack of real physical strength, was the weak link in his plan and, if I asked him to turn and run, I would always feel that I had, in Monica’s words, wimped out.

Together we studied pilot charts, the Admiralty Ocean Passages for the World, old sailing ship routers like the *Sailing Directions for the Ethiopic or South Atlantic Ocean 1882, ninth edition* by Alexander George Findlay FRGS, with addenda to 1899, to determine our schedule. Two periods show slightly more favorable winds, March and April or July and August. During the former, the pilot charts showed 20 to 24 percent chance of Force 7 to Force 12 westerly winds (right on the nose) but storms near Cape Horn tended to be of shorter duration than in other months. In July and August storms blew 23 to 26 percent of the time and lasted longer, but almost 15 percent of all winds came from the south or southeast. The long dark nights, the below-freezing temperatures of the southern winter, left us little choice. We felt we had to be approaching Cape Horn by March.

The Straits of Le Maire presented the first major hurdle. “The tidal streams create a rough cross-breaking sea which is impassable by boats and even dangerous to vessels of considerable size,” read the dour British Admiralty Pilot book. The Atlantic tide book showed a neap tide with only a 4-meter rise and fall for Tierra del Fuego between February 19th and 22nd instead of the 11 meters of spring tides. That date became the central focus of our life as we prepared *Taleisin* to sail from Virginia across the Atlantic to the Azores to rejoin the classic sailing ship route south in order to avoid hurricanes and headwinds over 8,000 miles; we would arrive at Mar del Plata, Argentina, our final provisioning port before the big one.



Taleisin's storm trysail is set on its own track.

We wanted to save every spare day we could for final preparations. For the first time in 35 years of voyaging, on this passage with this enormous goal in mind, we spent more time at sea than in port, stopping only at four carefully chosen re-provisioning ports for four days each. We arrived in Mar del Plata with six weeks to reinforce our sails, paint the bottom, and inspect every inch of the boat, from masthead to rudder pintles. We watched as the Argentinean economy collapsed around us and saw our warm Latin friends lose their hard-earned savings, then their jobs, and finally their hope. The currency kept devaluing until we found we were provisioning for one third the cost we had anticipated. We blessed the simplicity of our engineless boat since the devaluation also meant shops had few imported goods and even the customs offices closed down—which meant obtaining replacement parts for

engines, electronics, or complicated sailing gear would have been nearly impossible.

Our persistence paid off. On February 21st, after eight months of sailing through the calms of the Azorean High, the Sahara dust-laden northeast trades, the squally confusion of the ITCZ, the storm-tossed waters off Santa Catarina in Southern Brazil, then past the black cigar-shaped clouds of the Uruguayan pamperos then between the Antarctic-generated storms of the roaring 40s, *Taleisin* and her well-rested crew lay hove-to in a 30-knot northwesterly at 54°29"S, 64°46"W, surrounded by thousands of black-backed albatross, only ten miles north of the straits of Le Maire. Rays of sunshine highlighted the hard-edged cumulous clouds. The barometer began climbing from its low of 976 mb as we waited to follow the instructions of the Admiralty pilot book: "In order to avoid the race and a foul tidal stream, vessels should arrive...at the beginning of the south-going stream, one hour after high water at Bahia Buen Sucesso."

The amazing vista of spiky, cloud-draped mountains on Staten Island to port, and the weather-worn, round hills of the Tierra del Fuego's Three Brothers to starboard, brought back the words of Galileo Ferraresi, an Italian sailing instructor and noted mountain climber we'd met in the Azores when he and his partner Marina were homeward bound after two seasons of charter work in Antarctica and southern Chile. "Cape Horn is the Mount Everest of sailing," he'd told us. "Other mountains are technically more difficult to ascend. What is hard about Everest is getting to the final base camp with all your supplies and yourself in good condition so you have the stamina for the actual assault on the summit with enough left over to safely descend once you made it there."

With Cape Horn only 120 miles to the southwest, I felt we'd made base camp. Looking back I realize the favorable wind made me say it, but once it was said, I was committed. "Larry, we'll sail through the straits on tomorrow's tide, then I'm willing to spend as much time as we need getting around the cape. Let's give it three or four tries and if we don't do it now, we'll work into the Beagle Canal and lay up there and try it again in mid-

winter. But I am f...g going to get this boat around that f...g point one way or another.”

We both knew it wouldn't be easy.

Even when we got shoved back out of the Straits of Le Maire for the second time by a screaming southerly that turned the world white around us, my determination held. It took two and a half days and three frontal systems to bash our way past the over falls and currents of the straits.³ We spent the next three days getting our master's degree in working a small boat to windward in extreme conditions as we tried to make the next 90 miles against 2 knots of current. Three times we watched the barometer drop from 1025 mb to less than 980 mb, once going as low as 970 mb. Screaming southwesterly hail storms would blow for two hours to become zephyr-like northerlies for an hour then swing to a steady 45-knot southerly for the next hour or two. I apologized for laughing at Larry's purchase of the tiny scrap of bright orange Dacron I called our toys'l as that 40-square-foot flat-cut sail teamed with our triple-reefed main to keep *Taleisin* driving at 5 knots into square twenty-foot seas. I learned to let the sheet fly just as Larry reached the staysail stay to douse even that tiny sail for the worst of the squalls that screamed in at regular intervals.



Though I was disappointed when our first attempt to reach Cape Horn failed, we were well rewarded by spending a month in the Beagle Canal. There I became friends with the late Natalie Goodall, a biologist who has her own Marine Mammal Museum at her home on Harberton Estancia. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rae_Natalie_Prosser_de_Goodall



We were both elated when we had Cape Horn on our starboard beam.

Strangely, we both came to enjoy the battle, feeling close to those men of years past who'd had to fight these same conditions on ships far less weatherly, less handy, than ours. We worked to buoy each other's spirits with jokes, a hug, a food treat. Then on the sixth day I used our solar-charged, handheld VHF radio to ask for a weather forecast from a 250-foot Argentinean fishing vessel. Its Norwegian captain quizzed me carefully: "Are you feeling good about your boat? Do you have enough food? Hope so because these winds will grow stronger for another five days at least."

That afternoon we ran out of propane. We hove to while Larry assessed the situation. "Valve on the new tank is leaking." Though we had an extra tank to back up the two that normally provided six to eight weeks of cooking, we were now depending on the oven to back up our kerosene cabin heater. When the clouds cleared and Isla Nueva at the entrance to the Beagle Canal showed clearly 20 miles north of us, we both agreed: we might run short of heat, and we were being crowded by bags of now wet clothes. With

Cape Horn only 40 miles to the south we eased sheets to turn and reach toward the shelter of the Beagle Canal—attempt number one behind us.



When we sailed northwest into the Pacific and reached out of the Screaming 50's, we cracked a bottle of Champagne to celebrate. Five hours later we were hove-to in 65 knots of wind.



A second storm caught us 2 and a half days later and for the first time ever, we had to reef the storm staysail

The confines of the canal, with rocks, reefs, thick kelp beds, and few fully protected anchorages, plus screaming williwaws interspersed with drifting calms, was more intimidating, more dangerous, and more challenging than the open waters we'd just left. The history-soaked wilds of Southern Argentina, the magnificence of Harberton Estancia, the tiny Chilean military outpost at Puerto Williams, the intrepid sailors we met—all that made our month-long diversion due to a slow leak in a propane tank one of the highlights of our cruising life. Each day we checked for weather information, waiting for a break between closely packed low-pressure systems.

On March 11th 2002, bundled up like a teddy bear against the near freezing temperatures and 50 knot southerly wind, I walked into the Capitán del Puerto's office at Puerto Williams to see a weatherfax printout. It showed

a potential 3- or 4-day high-pressure gap between this storm and the next two lows bunched together 800 miles to the west. If we could arrange port clearance, buy final provisions, and sail out through the Beagle Canal and back to our inbound track, 90 miles in total within the next 24 to 30 hours, we'd find southeast winds to round the Horn.

"Got to go tomorrow at first light," Larry said as we computed the tides. "In fact, I'd like to leave at 0400 before the tide turns."

"This storm isn't going to ease off before tomorrow afternoon," I said.

"It'll be on the beam for the first 40 miles. After that islands will be only 15 miles upwind until we get south of the cape—they'll break the seas down. If we wait we'll have to fight headwinds all the way down. Might be too light to beat the east-going current. It was over 2 knots the last time."

A full gale drove snow flurries and hail stones across our deck as the survivors from the previous night's farewell party, including the crew from the well-known sail training yacht *Alaska Eagle*, helped us cast off our lines and wished us a fine farewell.

Never have we set sail in such unfavorable-feeling conditions. Never have I been more impressed with Larry's determination and stamina. For 16 hours he hand-steered *Taleisin* through rock-strewn channels, urging her through short steep seas as squalls swept down through mountain gullies, short-tacking right to the edges of kelp beds, calling down to me, "How close can we go, any rocks in this kelp? Can I take this lift?" He drove with all the intensity of his days as a racing skipper while I plotted our position, handed up hot drinks, and baked potatoes to warm his hands. Every hour or so I'd come on deck to helm while he went below to warm up and relieve himself. "Boy, do I envy your plumbing," he joked the first time when he came back after searching through four layers of clothes to reach his. "At least you don't have to grab yourself with icy cold hands!"

By dark we had sailed clear of the brutal wave-swept rocks and desolate islands of Nassau Bay. When I'd come below for my second off-watch, winds had dropped to 30 knots and Cape Horn lay less than 15 miles to windward. In spite of the weather predictions, I hadn't really believed we'd have light, fair winds for our rounding. Then Larry woke me.

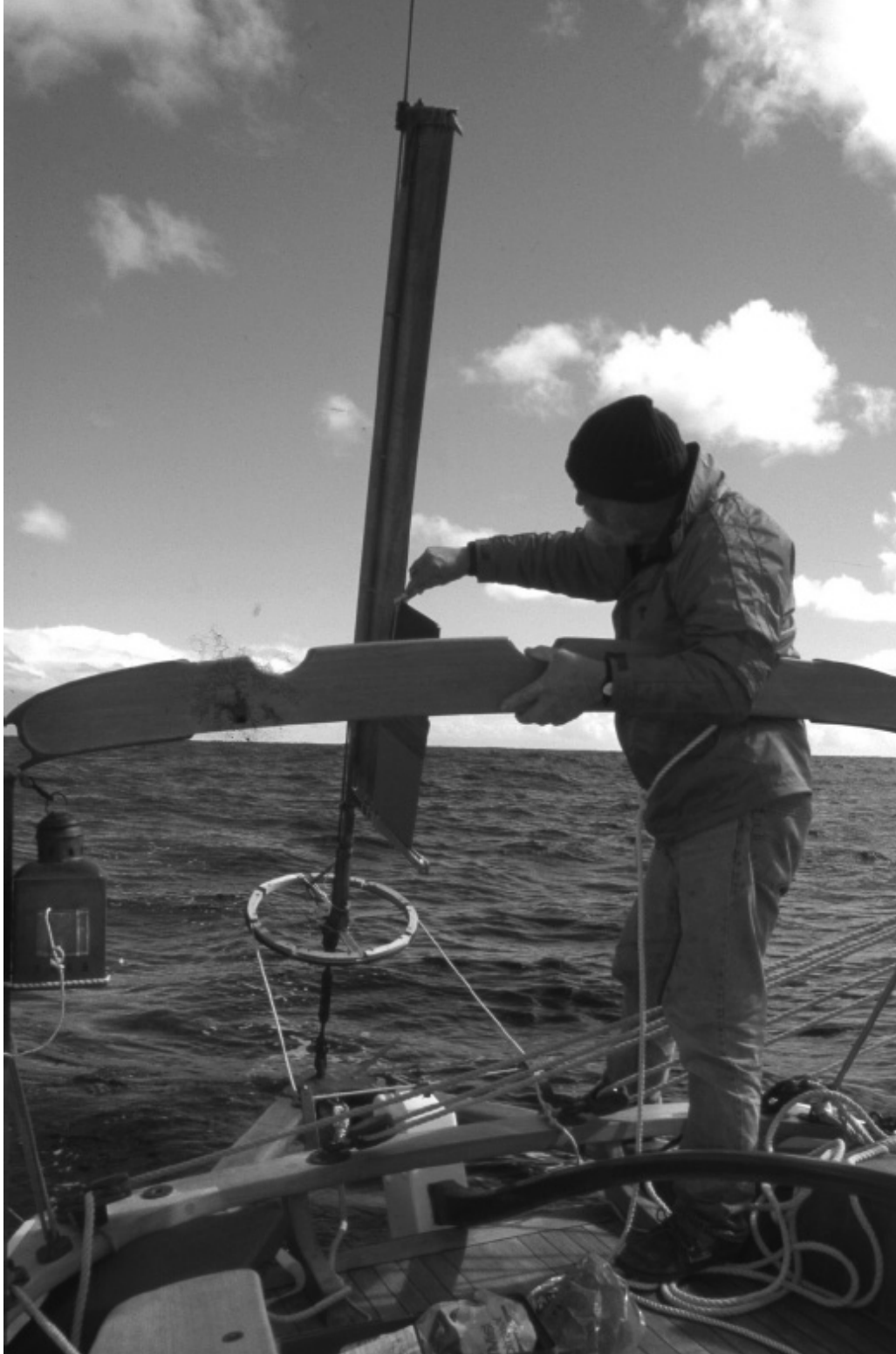
“March 13th 2002, 1600, Cape Horn aft of the starboard beam,” I wrote in our log. It had taken years for Larry to infect me with his dream. Now I’d felt the fever and the wonders of reaching that dream. As we sailed gently past this sleeping monster and into the Pacific I also felt a tremendous sense of relief. Though we had a thousand miles of potentially storm-tossed seas ahead, I realized I’d wake each and every morning of my life knowing I no longer had to sail around Cape Horn.

POSTSCRIPT

Our fair winds continued for five-and-a-half days, during which we sailed due west for 250 miles then northwest by west for 370 more, always keeping 120 to 140 miles off the Chilean coast even though these favorable winds tempted us to take the rhumb line course to get north faster. The cold plus heavy cloud presented our main challenges. But with patience Larry got shots of the sun most days. Then we found our real Cape Horn storm 20 miles after we crossed 50°S and sailed into the roaring 40s. For 2 ½ days we lay hove-to under trysail, as northwest winds blew a steady 50, screaming higher in gusts. We lost 40 miles to the southeast and, as we had only 100 miles between us and the rocks of Chile, reached due west as soon as the wind eased so we could regain our offing. Fourteen hours later the next storm roared in from the northwest and by midnight was blowing steadily above Force 12, according to later reports. An 86-foot British ketch sailed out of the Trinidad Canal during the break between the two storms. During the second storm it was 90 miles east of us. A few days later when we arrived In Puerto Montt her skipper said, “Fifty knots is okay. But 70, that’s just too much!” It is the first time we have had to reef our storm trysail. Though we did ship some solid water, we never felt threatened. *Taleisin*, the wonderful little ship Lyle Hess designed, brought us through with only five broken drinking glasses, eight wineglasses with broken stems and a broken upper arm on the windvane frame, a gear failure Larry blames on his own heavy-handedness when he was shortening down the vane’s Dacron cover during the worst of our roaring 40s storm.

FIVE ROUTES ROUND THE BOTTOM

For some, Cape Horn is the lure of the ultimate sailing challenge; to others it's the adventure of navigating thousands of miles of only partially charted Chilean Canals; yet others venture around the Horn seeking a different route from ocean to ocean. Each year perhaps 20 crews try to decide which route to take, should they go via the Straits of Magellan, the Beagle Canal, Afuera ("outside," as the Chileans call the route we chose), the inside route all the way to the Gulf of Ancud, or the outside route into the Pacific from Canal Trinidad north- or southbound. None of these offer easy sailing.



Though the upper arm that supports our windvane cover was broken during the second blow, we were able to improvise and get it working for the reach north towards Puerto Montt.



A warm welcome was awaiting us as we sculled into the marina at Puerto Montt to be greeted by Noel and Litar Barrott and their daughter Sina plus Beth Leonard and Evans Starzinger. Beth took this photo.

South of 45°S, frontal passages with winds up to hurricane force and lows of 980 mb or even 970 mb are a weekly (and sometimes daily) occurrence with highs of 1030 mb right behind to compress the isobars and increase the westerly winds. The lack of landmass anywhere else in the screaming 50s means nothing alleviates the force of the weather systems as they approach Cape Horn. The abrupt collision of huge masses of moving air against the sheer walls of the Andes plus extreme temperature gradients between mountain-top glaciers and sun-warmed pampas create williwaws of renown. The Captain of the Argentinean pilot boat working from Ushuaia greeted us by saying, “Welcome to Tierra del Fuego, where all the lies about the weather are true!”

New Zealanders Noel and Litar Barrott, whom we met at Puerto Williams, sailed extensively in extreme latitudes on board *Sina*, a glorious

53-foot ketch. “This is farther than cruising to Iceland or Greenland,” Noel said. “There you can almost always find ten days of fair weather for the relatively short passages. Fuel and repair assistance is available in dozens of fishing villages. Down here, the only place to get work done is Mar del Plata, then you are on your own until Valdivia.”

Only one port north of Punta Arenas—Puerto Natales—has a guaranteed fuel supply, so to go north inside you need either a very handy boat that can short-tack into gale and storm force winds for 1,000 miles, or a completely dependable engine and large fuel capacity. Once committed to the inside route, chances to change your mind and get out into the open ocean are 300 miles apart. The cold, combined with almost constant drizzle and strong winds, means you must have a reliable cabin heater, plus a generous supply of appropriate clothing; both are essential whichever route you choose.

Even sailing southbound inside the canals with favorable winds presents serious challenges. The Chilean Canals have one of the wettest climates in the world, with snow, rain, or drizzle at least 320 days a year. Thick fog, tidal currents of up to 9 knots, thick weed (kelp) both in the canals and in potential anchorages, and fierce williwaws (locally called *Rachas*) are common. You need superb ground tackle and spare anchors. To enjoy the adventures described by the late Bill Tilman, you have to leave your boat to climb through rain forests abundant with bird and wildlife and trek across pristine glaciers. To do this safely you’ll need the gear to cuddle your boat in among the rocks and secure her to trees on shore.

Most sailors bypass the shorter route through the Straits of Magellan in favor of the Beagle Canal for good reasons. For us it meant the chance for a side trip down through the windswept Wollaston Islands to Cape Horn itself, time to experience these isolated, legendary waters in the far drier climate found south and east of the Andes, plus tying at the Yacht Club Micalvi on the sunken Naval supply ship at Puerto Williams—a place we’ll never forget.

Crossing the continental shelf into the relatively shallow Drake Canal can be problematic for the occasional voyagers who go outside from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Depths change from 4,000 meters to 119 meters in

less than ten miles south of Isla Diego Ramirez, the main navigation light for approaching the Horn. The Cape Horn current collides against the high underwater cliffs to create upwelling which, combined with storm-driven northwesterly swells, turns into seriously dangerous waves. Most of the yacht knockdowns and rollovers we read about occurred in the Pacific approaches to the Drake Canal. (For this reason, we chose to cross the continental shelf 30 miles northwest of Diego Ramirez, where the sounding change is more gradual.)

According to the Chilean Armada (Navy) and our own research, the only other yachts to take the Afuera Atlantic to Pacific route (i.e., outside and against the wind and current as we did) over the past ten years were the 74-footers built for the Gobal Challenge race created by Sir Chay Blyth. As this route lies away from the steep-sided Andes, it is not subjected to the williwaws of the canals and is far less humid, even in the Pacific. During our passage 45°S to 45°S we had four days out of five with dry weather. With modern forecasts it is possible to choose good weather to sail past the Horn itself by waiting in the Beagle Canal.⁴ The most difficult aspect of this passage is resisting the temptation to use these favorable winds to immediately make northing. The safest choice is to go west, gaining every mile of offing between you and a 1,000-mile stretch of one of the most inhospitable lee shores in the world before the next northwesterly storm arrives—and of this you can be sure: arrive it will.

Rarely are there more than five or six days between the succession of low-pressure systems that circle Antarctica. Each low brings the screaming westerly winds of the sort we met, even after we had crossed 79°W and had the safety of 120 miles of open water between us and the cruel rocky shores of southwest Chile.

1 To sail east to west against the prevailing winds from Atlantic to Pacific has traditionally been called “Doubling the Horn.”

2 *Cape Horn to Starboard*, John Kretschmer, Burford Books 2010

3 During the three weeks of interviews we did for Herb McCormick’s biography project, we finally recounted the most worrisome incident of our

fight to get through the Straits of Le Maire. He used it to open *As Long as It's Fun!*, Paradise Cay Publications 2014.

4 Our weather planning was done by consulting three sites on the Internet, wxmaps. org/pix/shemi.fcst, weatheronline.co.uk (click on *sailing*) and accuweather.com. We carried only a shortwave receiver and handheld VHF on *Taleisin*.

Preparing for Cape Horn



Cape Horn: the ultimate testing ground for any sailing vessel, any crew. I recall our conversations around the topic of the Horn as if they occurred only yesterday.

Larry had urged me to join him in an attempt to sail around that mythical rock at the bottom of the world, in a route that would go against the prevailing “screaming 50s” westerly winds to reach the Pacific Ocean. The reasons he trotted out ranged from “Because it’s there” to “Something we’ve never tried before” to “Easiest way to get to New Zealand” to “You’re not getting any younger—better do it while we and the boat are in really good condition.” My reasons against: fear; don’t have to try everything; why not make easier choices now—I’m not getting any younger, don’t want to break my exquisite boat; she’s in almost perfect condition. *Illogic* prevailed and Larry’s arguments won out. Then we set to work. He agreed to change, modify, or add any detail I thought might enhance our chances of sailing from New England to Cape Horn, then onward to Chile’s west coast without gear failures.

The eight months we spent voyaging 9,200 miles to reach the mythical Atlantic entry point of a Cape Horn rounding at 50° S 65° W, the 21 days *Taleisin* battled against calms, adverse currents, and storm force winds to achieve our goal of going east to west, 50 South to 50 South, was the adventure of a lifetime. That passage, more than any other, was full of exciting, extremely challenging sailing, punctuated with moments of gut-twisting fear. But we experienced no worrisome gear failures and an amazing sense of sail-powered accomplishment. Each and every one of the dozens of items which found their way onto our pre-departure refitting and provisioning lists contributed to this success, from the simplest re-arranging of lockers to the complexity of the new sail-handling gear Larry invented just for the voyage.



We inspected every inch of the boat in Mar del Plata, Argentina, and had every single item off the work list before setting sail towards Cape Horn.

Taleisin offers the elegant simplicity of an efficient, straightforward sailing machine. Therefore we didn't have to consider mechanical or electronic gear and could concentrate on being sure the sails we carried and the simple gear we used to handle them were up to the challenge. We knew we'd need the ability to shorten sail quickly in preparation for the frontal squalls we would face as we neared the shadow of the Southern Andes. We'd also have to keep the boat moving in 50- or 60-knot winds as we reached south through the roaring 40s and screaming 50s, as well as in the light winds between the monotonous procession of low pressure systems that circle Antarctica.

When Larry talked of going to windward in storm force winds once we actually rounded the Horn to get away from the rock-bound lee shore of Chilean Patagonia, my imagination conjured up day upon day of horrendous pounding on a steeply canted boat. But he stated with quiet confidence, "We only have to make 300 to 350 miles of westing to give us a good, safe offing. We need to keep her moving steadily in the really heavy stuff, even if we're only making 3 or 3½ knots through the water. Then whenever it lightens up we have to drive her hard and make real speed."

Our first Cape Horn addition was a 40-square-foot sail—the one I dubbed our "Toys'l"—cut from bright orange 9-ounce Dacron, triple stitched, with foot and leech line, and heavily reinforced clew and tack patches. My first impression when this tiny sail (our 100 percent working jib is 420 square feet) arrived was that it looked like something a sailmaker would set up on a stumpy spar as a demo at a boat show. My impression when I hauled it up as a storm staysail when storm force squalls threatened to shove us south toward Antarctica was much different. Paired with our triple-reefed mainsail, this well-cut toys'l gave *Taleisin* the power to gain miles to windward so we could work close the shore of Tierra del Fuego and work clear of a 2-knot east-going current.

A few weeks later, after we actually rounded the Horn, our toys'l gained "favorite sail" status by lending its steadying power on the headstay in

combination with a full staysail and double-reefed mainsail. Because it is flat-cut, it formed a beautiful airfoil shape to give us extra windward drive without extra heeling.

We have never been comfortable with roller furling sails and their potential downsides: the extra windage, the wear and tear, and the potential UV and stress damage to the sail, the cost, the chance—however small—that the sail would not roll up completely or could unroll unexpectedly in squalls, and, most important, the poor sail shape of a partially furled sail which, no matter how carefully tweaked, tends to become *fuller* as it is rolled.¹ This is exactly the opposite of what we needed for heavy weather windward performance. But the ability to douse sail quickly with no need to go out to the end of our bowsprit was a major concern—and potential attraction for the roller furler system. “To get a new idea, read an old book,” Larry quipped as he studied the running headstay arrangement on *Ziska*, the 100-year-old Morecombe Bay Prawner our keen young British friend Ashley Butler had restored and sailed across the Atlantic to rendezvous with us in Virginia. *Ziska* has a long 14-foot bowsprit with the headstay attached to a galvanized ring. To set sail, Ashley pulls the ring inboard until it reaches the stem of the boat. Crew working on deck hank the sail on, haul it aloft, then pull on an outhaul line which is led through a mortise on the bowsprit end, and the headstay and sail slide outboard. To reduce sail slack off the outhaul, let go the halyard, and pull on the sheets; the headstay comes inboard and the sail falls onto the foredeck.

We both felt the ring would appear disproportionately large on *Taleisin*’s eight-foot bowsprit. It would scar up the paint and varnish work. I worried about the lack of masthead support the headstay offered once the sail was inboard. But most important, it would be almost impossible to get the headstay tension we wanted in order to gain the windward ability offered by stable Dacron sails.

Larry did not have an easy time convincing me to let him bolt a 1¼” by 3/16” bronze track onto our elegantly varnished bowsprit. Nor did the first six versions of his Highfield lever system work perfectly. During our eight-month voyage across the Atlantic, then south toward Mar del Plata in

Argentina, we kept discovering new problems with the system. The standing headstay I insisted we keep caught and opened the jib hanks so they came off the running headstay when we were running free; solution: fair off the edge of the pull button on each hank pin. The outhaul lock wouldn't click down into place; solution: a better lead for a shock cord spring. The outhaul line required more tension than a cam cleat could handle; solution: lead it to the rope gypsy on the anchor windlass. Each time I thought I'd learned to operate the sliding headstay system, Larry changed some detail. During our voyage from Mar del Plata at 39° south to our rendezvous with the winds of the 50s, we practiced with the newest improved version of our sliding (as opposed to running) headstay. It made dropping our headsail and removing it a snap. On the other hand, getting a new headsail attached and set was a bit more complex even if it was physically easier. Then we began our run into what appeared to be the benign Straits of Le Maire exactly as we planned, just at the beginning of the season's weakest south-flowing neap tide on the 20th of February. Our mainsail and working jib were pulling us at a satisfying 7 knots, flocks of royal and black-browed albatross skimmed across the following seas. Then a long twisty horizontal cigar-shaped cloud rolled toward us. In less than 1½ minutes we had that headsail down, unhanked, and stored under the inverted dinghy on the cabin top. We did this in the nick of time, too: just as the first 70-knot gusts turned the air and water around us white with flying spume. One point to Larry for updating an old idea.



I had laughed at the idea of a 40-square-foot staysail. However, it proved to be a true workhorse on this voyage.

Heavy wind, light wind, almost no wind: that was the story of our rounding. And that changeable was what had plagued skippers from the golden days of sail. Captain Richard Quick on the bark *Edward Sewell* took 67 days in 1904 to make the rounding. The fiercest winds shredded his smallest storm sails. He couldn't keep his ship moving with almost 12 inches of grass growing on the bottom and no light-weather sails to help him when the winds died off, which meant the two-knot east-going current robbed him of all he'd gained in the stronger winds. Larry had balked at the idea of spending US\$1,600 on a 677-square-foot nylon drifter in Mar del Plata instead of \$400 to patch our old one up for the fifth time. That new drifter flew for part or all of seven days during our actual rounding of the Horn, sometimes going up only minutes after the winds had been blowing 40 or 50 knots. With its four jib hanks to attach it to the sliding headstay, it pulled us close-hauled at 3 or 4 knots in only 5 or 6 knots of apparent wind. Set flying free on its Kevlar luff rope, it kept us reaching or running in light zephyrs in a stately manner that Captain Quick could never have imagined possible. Point to Lin.

I had balked at Larry's idea of spending money to add a row of reef points on our 96-square-foot storm trysail. "It held us hove-to nicely off Australia, blew 70 and 80 just as it is—waste of money," I said. My tune changed when, at 49°40" in the Pacific, *Taleisin* lay hove-to in a steady 70, gusting 85, with the trysail reduced to 45 square feet by that \$150 dollar row of reef points. Point to Larry (see photo).

In Mar del Plata we removed every sail we carried and spread them out on the lawn of the local yacht club. Then Larry replaced any chafed stitching and added leather protecting patches on the luff rope under the jib hanks. Larry over-stocked our sail repair kit, doubling the usual inventory of twine, needles, leather, nylon webbing, spare fabric, and sail repair tape. The heavy-duty bronze sail rings and the dies to set brass liners in place added an extra 50 pounds to our cargo. After seven days of the roughest sailing in our lives, as we forced our way through the Straits of Le Maire then tried to

reach the Horn, we diverted into the Beagle Canal to dry off and regroup. There we found the clew rings on both the second and third reefs in the mainsail had started to pull right through nine layers of clew reinforcing fabric. With the nearest sailmaker 1,500 miles away, our on board tools and repair supplies gave point and match to Larry.



I balked at the cost of adding these reef points to the storm trysail. However, as you can see in the photo on page 260, Larry was right. We needed them.

I wanted extra handholds to help me keep my balance to grab as I climbed in and out of the companionway then headed forward onto the side decks in extreme conditions. A simple but elegant solution was to secure bronze handles on each side of the companionway board supports on the back of the cabin then drill ½-inch holes in each of the dinghy chocks on the cabin top. As we headed out to sea we used a bowline to secure a ¾"-diameter line to the handholds then led it up and over the cabin top, through

the chocks, and around the dinghy securing cleats. Now I had a full-length line to steady me as I worked on the side deck in rough stuff; in port it could be easily removed to leave the cabin top clutter-free.

My exceptionally strong desire to keep salt water and rain out of the boat and heat inside meant our companionway area got extra attention. Primary among the upgrades was to add a simple-to-use (even with gloves) latch to secure the sliding hatch so that neither rough motion nor water breaking into the cockpit could force it open. The lock had to be operable from the cockpit and also from inside the boat. Larry's solution was ingeniously simple, adapted once again from one used by Ashley Butler on *Ziska*. Larry bent a 3/8"-diameter rod into a staple-like shape then inset it into the underside of the sliding hatch. When not in use, it lies completely flush and out of the way. In the locked position it lies closely over the drop boards so it can't be snagged by lines or foul weather gear. Though we never had a sea board *Taleisin* over the stern, even when we were running in storm force winds into the Straits of le Maire, the rough motion and slashing spray as we broad-reached through the storm-tossed roaring 40s of the Pacific put this new lock to the test. It scored 10 out of 10.

Our flexible canvas companionway pram hood/hatch turtle was upgraded to make it more waterproof against heavy dollops of water coming from forward of the beam. Larry replaced the snap-style hooks that held its lower edge in place with lengths of screw-in-place internal sail track. The cover now has a bolt rope along its lower edge for a water-tight connection. In spite of some real thumpers and green water on deck as we battled to windward, the only major shower of salt water to come below was from two mis-timed hatch openings.

Another *wish we'd done it sooner* item was the canvas companionway cover we made in Bermuda in anticipation of the tropical heat and thunder storms we knew lay between us and our destination 10,000 miles ahead. Though we came to love the canvas during warmer weather, it was even

more appreciated as we got farther south where, as is usually the case, the majority of winds were less than 25 knots. The canvas and batten cover Larry created is shown in I found it far easier and faster to open and close than the drop boards. It also let more light into the boat.

Our work and provisioning list seemed endless, especially as we seemed to add items at the bottom just as fast as we crossed them off at the top. My galley strap was upgraded with a new, extra-strong adjustable lanyard ([Figure 33.1](#)). I bought three dozen large sponges to stuff around bottles, jars, dishes and pots to cut the noises when the going got rough. Then in the final weeks before our actual attempt at the “Big One” we did an up-close-and-personal inspection of the “machine” we’d depend on by repainting and re-varnishing every exterior surface from mast head to rudder heel, from bowsprit end to boomkin end, including sanding the teak decks with 60-grit sandpaper to insure the best possible non-skid surface. As we worked together sanding, then applying paint or varnish, we looked over each piece of gear, every shackle, wire, and line and made notes: grease this here, tighten these sail track screws, renew a shackle seizing there.

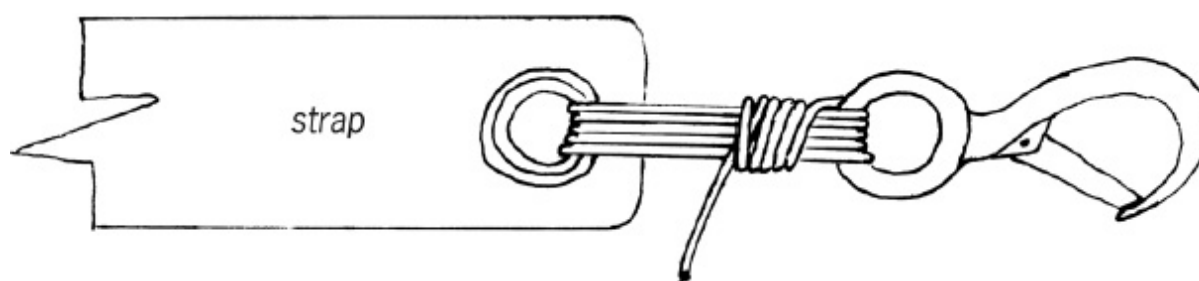


Figure 33.1. The adjustable lanyard and clip on my galley strap

Then we turned to the interior and rough sanded the bare teak treads of the companionway ladder and the floorboards with 60-grit sanding belts to create a non-skid surface that felt odd to my bare feet but provided wonderful traction for the boat shoes or boots I wore as soon as we headed south. I emptied every inch of the boat, from chain locker to transom, section at a time, and used dish soap, ammonia, and gallons of water to scrub her clean and hose her out. (We are able to do this kind of thorough washdown

thanks to our minimalist electrical system with only two stereo speakers that cannot be easily removed.) Then I rearranged my normal stowage plan to move six boxes containing 4,000 transparencies from their normal easy-to-reach place in the main cabin; I double bagged and vacuum packed then put the irreplaceable transparencies as far away from any possible salt water in a harder-to-reach area in the forepeak. I filled the space they'd left with two complete vacuum-packed sets of clothes for each of us, plus four vacuum-packed towels just in case we took a lot of water down below. Larry teased me, saying my precautions were "over the top." He said, "We'll bail out before I put us in a position to get that much water down below," and I knew those words were meant to be reassuring. But I had lived with him long enough to know he's a battler. Furthermore, the closer we got to our goal, the more determined I became to make it around and not be frightened off by water coming below that might threaten irreplaceable items. I'm glad I did, as the extreme moisture in the air caused mildew in unventilated corners of the boat, but every vacuum-packed item smelled fresh and felt dry when I opened it.

It is amazing how even the smallest item on our outfitting and provisioning list added to our sense of confidence. Almost daily one or the other of us would comment, "Glad we added this" or "Sure was good we did that." As we sailed in to Puerto Montt, Chile, to savor the end of this singular adventure, I looked around at the boat we'd come to love and could see signs of wear and tear: scuffed paint, a few dents on the varnish, worn leather protectors on the sails and spinnaker pole, chafed lines, and a duct-tape-reinforced windvane frame—broken when Larry lurched as he was reefing the vane's sail in 80 knots of wind. Only as I prepared to let go the anchor did I realize every single item on my lists had been important, except the one that had been most difficult. I'd searched through English language shelves of every bookstore in Mar del Plata, raided the shelves of each English-speaking friend we made for books to fill the long hours at sea. Between us we normally read three or four books a week on passage. Now, during 21 days at sea, we only got through two. The hard sailing, the need to spend as much time as possible "in the sack" getting rest, the excitement of

working together to drive *Taleisin* to windward, the wondrous sea-life and birds of the far south, the exciting sense of adventure—all that had filled every hour of this voyage of a lifetime.

THE EXTRAS

No cruising boat has unlimited storage capacity. *Taleisin*, at 29'9" LOA, 10'9" beam, and 17,800 pounds of displacement, has more than the average 34-footer since she carries no engine or diesel. This means we can carry sufficient provisions for 70 days, including 85 gallons of water. Final fresh provisions put *Taleisin* about two inches below her designed waterline for the first part of any transoceanic passage. To strive for the peak performance we felt this passage required, we wanted her right on her lines. Because of the potentially cold, rough weather we knew we'd face on this adventure, and taking into account our determination to keep at sea and lie hove-to to wait for breaks in the weather, we envisioned potentially 30 days at sea and wanted supplies for another 30 days as a buffer.

In Mar del Plata, Argentina we cleaned out every inch of the boat in preparation for the voyage and sent 120 pounds of favorite books, souvenirs, and tools to our storage shed in New Zealand. Then we sold off or gave away almost 600 pounds of superfluous gear. This gave us room for the special provisions including:

- A spare mainsail and staysail. The fabric on our four-year-old sails already used for 18,000 miles of voyaging—showed a 30 percent loss of strength when we tested them. Fortunately, we had two almost new racing sails in storage, so we had them forwarded to us—insurance in a sail bag, so to speak. We never needed them.
- A spare ten-pound aluminum tank of butane to add to the 20 pounds we usually carry. We stored this on the cabin top under the upturned dinghy. We doubted our 6,250-btu kerosene cabin heater would be sufficient for the freezing conditions, nor were we sure it could cope

with the extreme winds and rough sailing. We wanted to be able to use the oven on our cooker as a backup. We needed and used the extra butane.

- Thirteen gallons of extra water in a flexible neoprene tank (made by Nauta) which we nestled under the floorboards in the main cabin. We didn't need the extra water on this passage, but kept the arrangement for future voyages. Whenever we were doing coastal cruising we could roll up the tank and use this area for other things.
- A second set of foul weather gear for each of us. Our primary set is store-brand, breathable gear rated for coastal cruising and racing at 1/3 the price of brand name offshore foulies. This worked well but we enjoyed the backup of a completely dry set to change into while the first set was drying by the heater.
- Four warm knitted wool hats, backed by two fleece head warmers. Three pairs of fleece gloves, three sets of polypropylene underwear (wish we'd had one more). All of this gear was vital to back up three heavyweight Guernsey sailing sweaters we each prize (scruffy as they have become after many years of use).
- Paper plates. We bought 150 as we felt—rightly, it turned out—that washing dishes used extra fresh water and could be a difficult chore in rough conditions. We used a normal plate to support the lightweight paper, which was the only available option in Argentina. Wish we could have found paper bowls, too.
- Instant cup-a-soups. Normally these are not a favorite, but we used 48 during the 21 days we spent going from 50 South to 50 South.
- 25 kilos of small baking potatoes. Nothing is easier to cook or serves better as hand warmers than small-sized baked potatoes. Baking them got the cabin temperatures up, an added bonus.

- Knee-high, slit-soled sea boots, with kick plates on the heel for easy removal. Cost? Less than US\$75.00. They were perfect. Their high, stiff tops let us slide our foul weather pants down around the boots so we could store boots and pants ready to jump into, right next to the companionway.
- Fisherman's rubber gloves—large enough for knit gloves inside. We had a pair of brand-name, so-called waterproof, breathable sailing gloves but found they soon became waterlogged and difficult to dry out.
- Treats, including a generous supply of fancy bottled, canned, and pressure-packed gourmet foods like peaches in Marsala wine, and surprise gifts. The extreme conditions and times when we could neither keep to our normal watch patterns nor get full rest meant moral boosters really mattered.
- The confetti—It added a bright spot of celebration to lighten the mood while passing over these ghost-ridden waters.



I smuggled a big bag of confetti onto the boat in Mar del Plata. Added lots of fun as we sailed sedately past Cape Horn.

1 Several factors influenced our preference for hank-on sails. Our young ages and substantial sailing experience plus the smallish boats we chose were only part of it. With Larry's previous experience as a racing skipper, we both found we enjoyed joining local racing fleets for round the buoys racing almost as much as we enjoyed sailing engine-free. To get top windward performance for both endeavors we needed the ability to remove and hank on various headsails cut for different wind conditions. Furthermore, both *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin* were not only low-wooded (low topsides) but built with high bulwark rails and absolutely clear side decks, so going forward to douse and change sails was less daunting than it could be on many modern cruising boats. Our discomfort with roller furlers was probably further fed by several deliveries we did in our earlier cruising days. Fourteen of the boats we delivered in the 70s and 80s were production boats with roller furling headsails. On 12 of these, we encountered problems with the roller furling gear, including a broken headstay inside the furler.

I am currently what one would call a senior sailor and am voyaging on board a 40-footer with roller furling headsails. I am impressed with the improvements made to roller furling gear; it is much more robust and more reliable than those we dealt with before. So though many of the concerns expressed in this article still hold true, I doubt I would have the agility and strength to deal with hanked-on sails on a boat of this size with only two of us on board. But one caveat I would have for anyone using roller furling headsails is: once you set off voyaging, be sure you have a new headstay fitted every four or five years as is it impossible to keep an eye on the wire or swages which are inside the furling gear.

34

Volcanoes South to Volcanoes North

Chasing the Demon Schedule



If we had lulled ourselves into thinking the adventure was behind us after rounding the Horn, we would have been mistaken. We'd missed our departure date from Puerto Montt due to a work list that, as usual, kept expanding. Then there were the extras: an extra barbeque with Chilean friends Paolita and John, an extra excursion to the best seafood café on Chiloé, an extra... Instead of catching the smallest neap tides of the year for our departure from the Chilean Canals through the 17-mile long Canal Chacao, we finally lay at anchor seven miles from the entrance a day before the largest tides of the year.

I was apprehensive as I studied the sailing directions one last time. With 21.4 feet of rise, the tide rushed from the deep inland sea of the Gulf of Ancud onto a steep ledge and then through a mile-wide 60-foot deep channel to run at 9 knots. Overfalls, which the Coast Pilot described as “dangerous,

especially in strong winds,” lay directly in our way. A rocky shoal divided the narrowest part of the channel to produce “...severe whirlpools during west-going tides.” Fortunately, strong winds were not predicted. In fact, as we drifted free of our anchorage at Puerto Atao three hours before the turn of the tide, our problem was no wind. “According to the directions, there is less than two minutes of slack water in the canal. I figure we’ve got to be right off the narrows at 13:20, just at high water. We’ll never make it,” I moaned to Larry as he set our 16-foot sculling oar in place and began what he liked to call “aquatic jogging.”

“Relax,” Larry sighed. “We miss the tide today, we’ll anchor over by Puerto Chacao, or go back to Atao and try again tomorrow.”

The water began to darken to the south. The glassy stretch of water between us and the wind line began to slowly shrink, and so did the time left to our rendezvous. “Never make it at slack water,” I said to Larry. “Sure don’t want to go through with a full tide.”

“Come on, Lin, you’ve seen some of the rough-looking sailing workboats around here. They go in and out of this canal—so can we.” As if to mark his words, two local fish boats lifted anchor to the south and headed toward the canal as the first zephyrs of wind filled *Taleisin*’s sails.

Then it happened: the full force of a cold but welcome 20-knot southwesterly bellied our working sails. *Taleisin*, seeming eager for the voyage ahead, lunged toward the canal to arrive at the entrance within minutes of the change of tide. With three sails set on a beam reach, she was making almost 7½ knots through the water but gaining less than 3 over the bottom. Within five minutes this changed dramatically—so dramatically that I let out a squeal of anticipation. For about 90 seconds, the sea around us assumed the normal pattern of still water ruffled by a fresh breeze then, suddenly, upwellings formed and we were making 9 knots, then 10, then 11. And still the currents kept gathering speed, overfalls and whirlpools hissing and cresting in a cacophony of watery sounds. *Taleisin* plunged ahead, now close-hauled on the port tack, spray flying from beneath her bow. Less than 30 minutes after the tide turned, we had 7 knots of push from the current to increase our apparent wind from 20 knots into a reef-requiring 27 knots.

Even when we sailed clear of the narrows and the pass opened to spread almost eight miles over the wide expanse of shallow water, the current still added 6 knots to our windward rush. We covered 17 miles in 80 minutes.

As we came abeam of the Punta Corona lighthouse, I used our hand-held VHF to report our departure to the Armada who manned the lighthouse. "Twenty knots southwest easing to 15 tonight," the lighthouse keeper informed me. I turned to Larry and said, "You were right. I shouldn't have worried about that pass. Wasted my time putting in the companionway drop boards, securing the chain pipes, turning the Dorade vents, I'll go below and make dinner now we can reach off and ease sheets."

I listened to the sweet sound of the sheets being eased as I opened the ice chest to get the steak I planned to grill. I heard Larry shaking out the two reefs he'd put in the mainsail.

My feet seemed to drop out from under me as *Taleisin* went into a nose dive, then reared up at an unbelievable angle as what sounded like a solid wall of water rushed the length of her decks and a fine spray squeezed beneath the firmly seated skylight hatch. "Look at this," Larry yelled excitedly. "No, don't open the hatch!" he screeched before I had time to scramble to my feet. A second wave washed the decks, then a third; the bucking ride continued as the pit of my stomach began to heave and I descended into 'grababucket' seasickness. *Taleisin* rushed onward, oblivious, climbing seas at a 30 degree angle, then slamming down the far side in a smother of foam and lashing spray. The sliding hatch rattled against its restraining lock with each dip. Pots and pans which normally stayed firmly settled rushed fore and aft in their locker with each lunge, and over it all I heard Larry whooping and shouting like a cowboy on a bucking bronco. "What a sea! Hold on! Here comes another!" Then, almost as suddenly the seas changed, *Taleisin* settled into the rhythmic motion I associated with being at sea. My stomach, too, was settling as Larry unlocked the sliding hatch and climbed below to shed his dripping foul weather gear. "It's safe to come out now," he teased. "You should have seen those seas piling up on the edge of the continental shelf. Must have been 30 feet high, only 100 feet between them." He pulled the chart over to show it to me. "Look here, it

drops off almost 2,000 feet in less than half a mile where we crossed and that current was at full ebb hitting a 15-foot-high southwesterly swell. If I'd have thought about it we could have anchored behind Punta Corona lighthouse and waited for the tide to slack off—would have had a lot drier ride.”



We bid a fond farewell to the volcanoes of the Gulf of Corcovado as the tide towed us through the Canal Chacao



Larry is repairing some stitching on the head of the mainsail as *Taleisin* seems to revel in the fresh tradewinds we found a few days out of the Juan Fernandez Islands.

“Drier, yes,” I answered, “but nowhere near as exciting for you—made all the work I did closing everything up for the canal worthwhile. Besides, stopping would have cost us another day.”



The fiddles on *Taleisin*'s table can be removed easily so it works well for larger projects including the charts we used.

All through our cruising years, we had avoided schedules other than those imposed by the seasons or the need to earn “freedom chips,” as we called the money that kept us going. We felt the pressure schedules imposed when we had to deliver other people’s boats and didn’t want to transpose that into the non-working times in our lives. But now we’d broken our cardinal rule—cruising and deadlines don’t mix. Several months previously, we’d accepted invitations to have *Taleisin* front and center at the wooden boat festival in Victoria, British Columbia, and a week later at the Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival, which seemed a fitting end to our Cape Horn voyage. At that time, *Taleisin* lay under the shadows of the Andean Volcanoes in Puerto Montt, Chile, winterized and empty. After her passage around Cape Horn and into the Pacific, Larry and I had flown to our New Zealand home to work with a professional editor on our *Storm Tactics* DVD. Then we’d flown back to Chile to voyage onward. Before agreeing to bring *Taleisin* to Victoria and Port Townsend, we’d dug out *Ocean Passages for the World* and scaled off the old square riggers’ route that offered the best promise of fair winds. Following that gently curving route northwest to steer clear of the calms near the Galapagos, then keeping to the west of the North Pacific High, meant 7,900 miles non-stop. “Let’s say we average 135 miles a day,” I’d murmured, pulling out my calculator. Then I stated emphatically, “I’d go stir-crazy just thinking of being at sea for two months solid.”

So out came the pilot charts. Our compromise route, allowing for three re-provisioning stops, would be 1,700 miles longer but took us through the narrowest point of the inter-tropical convergence zone. “Even if we only make 100 miles a day, that’s 95 days. If we get underway by March 15th we’ll catch the neap tides to get out of Chile. Worst-case scenario, we’ll have 30 days to spend re-provisioning along the way, and two weeks to get ready once we reach the Pacific Northwest,” I’d said, looking at my figures.

“That’s a real worst case,” Larry stated, tracing the wind roses along our intended route. “Should have brisk tradewinds a lot of the time, could make 150 mile days. It will be mean a lot of time at sea. But remember how great

it was having *Seraffyn* at the festival when we sailed across the North Pacific? Come on, let's try."

"Low, 46 North, 138 West, moving northeast 10 knots, radius of gale force winds, 360 miles south semi-circle," the mechanical voice of WWV short wave radio crackles from our short wave receiver.

"Just keep moving," I mumble as I scale off the distance between it and our position.¹

"What's that?" Larry asks, struggling to wake for his 2300 watch.

"Just hoping this low keeps moving faster than us. Don't need any more wind than we've got."

"Don't complain, we're really trucking," he says as I pull off two layers of clothes to take his place in the still warm bunk.

The urge to make time over a longer passage informed our schedule every step of the way. And it began after only a week out of Chile.

It took seven days of determined sailing through variable winds and changing weather to sight Isla Juan Fernandez. And when it appeared on our bow, instead of feeling the satisfaction of a good landfall I found myself resenting the 90-mile-a-day average we'd maintained—and focused on our schedule as much as anything else. Scribbled computations along the edge of our log book pages confirm this: "90 mile average, 100 days, 19 days spare," reads a note next to the entry for one morning's calculations.

After we anchored in the very deep but surprisingly calm open roadstead fronting the capital, San Juan Bautista, a fisherman approached. "Hola," he called. "Do you need to use email? I have booked an hour today and only need 20 minutes. Next open slot is in three days."

I laughed at this unusual greeting but immediately said, "Come on, let's use the Internet to look at a weather site. If this kind of weather is going to persist, might be a good idea to top up our water tanks and get moving."

“We aren’t in that much of a rush,” Larry countered. “This is a special place and we can afford to spend a few days here.” Larry countered. “Let’s accept his invite *just* because he made it—invite him to bring his partner out here for drinks tonight. Nice way to get to know more about the island,”

Set just over 300 miles off the coast of Chile, Isla Juan Fernandez is almost as isolated today as it was 200 years ago when the marooned seaman Alexander Selkirk was abandoned there, his plight to be immortalized years later by Defoe's classic book *Robinson Crusoe*. Though small airplanes can land at the far south of the island, from there it is almost two hours by boat, “weather permitting,” to the only settlement, where landing is also accomplished, “weather permitting.” By land the same trip from the airport to the only settlement on the island can take up to ten hours for the stouthearted. A small supply ship calls in once a month. Communication with the mainland is limited to radio transmissions. It is no wonder the 500 inhabitants were so excited by the gift provided by Bill Gates only a month before our arrival. Due to this largess (or a grand exercise in marketing), all the libraries of Chile now boast at least three computer stations linked to the Internet by radio—and that includes even the tiny library of this tiny community.



When we noticed there was something chafing our jib halyard, Larry went aloft to inspect the masthead sheave box. He found a rough edge on the metal and filed it off.

Our stop in this place (and Larry was right—it *was* special) included a rich lobster dinner at a fisherman’s home and hours spent discussing the island’s future with the librarian and postmaster, guardians of the computer center. We also crossed paths with the American treasure hunter, Bernard Kaiser, who spends six months each year digging for Spanish treasure he is certain lies buried in one of the isolated ravines west of the village. The signs Bernard has uncovered in his government-approved excavation do seem to indicate his treasure map has some validity. A week after we arrived there was the craziness of “supply ship day,” which meant, for me, being pulled through the village by two local women to reach the best shop for each type of fresh provisions before the shelves were once again swept bare.

Finally, fully provisioned again, there was no excuse to ignore the thing that pushed us northward: the schedule.

We set off, briskly ticking off the miles as the Peruvian current carried us into the true southeast trades. We both lamented giving up the chance to detour and explore Easter Island or the Galapagos. “I hate to miss them, might never sail so close again,” I sighed as our taffrail log spun at a steady 6+ knots.

“Lin, no matter how much we try to do, we are going to miss hundreds of opportunities. Let’s enjoy the plan we’ve made and see where it leads.”

Thirty-one days later as the peaks of Hiva Oa rose clear ahead of us, I looked back at one of the best tradewind romps we’ve ever had, clocking a fabulous 150-mile-days with only occasional squalls to liven the night watches. On that sail we enjoyed hours filled with good books, whales, dolphins, and our usual poor fishing luck (partially due, I am sure, to my pulling in the fish line whenever Larry climbed into his bunk).

But with that landfall, as with the last, the schedule marred the moment.

“We’ve regained some of our time,” I commented as I began clearing the forward cabin in anticipation of a night spent sleeping together. “If we clear for Hawaii within ten days we’ll have some extra time in hand just in case we get stalled in the ITCZ.”

“Can’t we forget about leaving until we actually get there?” Larry asked. “Come on, relax. The world will not end, even if we never get to Port Townsend. It is not a matter of life and death.”

He was right, of course. But my mind was racing with all the places we needed to be, and the things we needed to do. We’d lingered in the beautiful anchorages of the Marquesas for two weeks, meeting up with old friends on shore, celebrating closing the loop of our outbound track—even if it took 18 years to complete a second circumnavigation—and sharing the joys of newer voyagers who had just completed their first long ocean passage into the tropics. Feeling replete and refreshed, we’d worked our way through the light winds in the lee of Nuka Hiva and headed west for most of a day to be well to leeward and downcurrent of the rocky islets lying between us and the equator. And yet, even as we moved gently through these magical islands, I felt the press of time.

“Larry, let’s pack on more sail,” I had said then. “We’ve only got three months left and over 4,000 miles to sail. If we get stalled in the doldrums, we could lose a week.”

“Calm down,” Larry answered. “If we get delayed, we can moor *Taleisin* in Hawaii and fly there ourselves—remember, we never promised we’d bring *Taleisin*, just said we’d try.”

The sweet softness of a tropical night caressed my skin as I climbed into the cockpit at 0200, twelve days out from Taihoe Bay. According to Larry’s last sights, the big navigation light on Hawaii’s southernmost tip could be visible during my watch. As *Ocean Passages for the World* predicted, by lying just free of close-hauled, we’d slipped though the doldrums in less than a day and kept from being swept to the west by the equatorial currents. Six hundred miles later we’d had enough easting to ease sheets for a fast romp toward our next rest and recreation port.

Eighteen hundred miles in 12 days—that put some time in my “schedule bank,” I thought as I scanned the horizon.

It was then that a flicker of light caught my eye. Odd color, I thought—must be a ship.

An hour later the same light had become distinctly orange and was joined by half a dozen more spots of light. Thinking these were lights from some small town, I went below for the binoculars. But I couldn’t pick up the lighthouse.

I climbed onto the cabin top to get a better view. Enhanced by the binoculars, the orange dots became a solid line against the black of the night. I gasped as I slowly comprehended the reality of this—the sight that must have been like a message from the Gods to the first Polynesians who risked everything to find these islands. Like them, my first sight of Hawaii was the orange glow of lava forced from the center of the earth to flow in all-consuming glory down the sides of the volcano ahead of me. As I watched that fiery river grow ever closer I felt a sense of connection to those first sailing canoe voyagers and realized that for them, with their limited supply of food and water, a timely landfall had been a matter of life and death.

Larry's words came to me, and I also recalled our cruising encounters in Ireland where local folks had joked, "Laws are only guidelines." I pondered the truth that had made cruising work so well for us: schedules, too, must be only guidelines.

I woke Larry just before dawn so he too could witness this fiery, primordial reminder of timelessness. Then, with a far more balanced view of "the schedule," I began listing the provisions we'd need for the last and final leg of our voyage.

Six weeks later, the gale I'd been tracking turned north. After lying close-hauled through the easterly trades for two weeks out of Hilo, Hawaii, we'd finally gotten past the Pacific High, eased sheets, and began running down our easting. Our goal—Victoria, Larry's birthplace—now lay only 600 miles ahead. After sailing 9,000 miles in less than four months, my list of in-port jobs-to-do and phone calls was five pages long and we only had six weeks before *Taleisin* was scheduled to be at the Victoria Wooden Boat Festival. But now we had a fresh westerly breeze to carry us right to Cape Flattery at the entrance to the Straits of Juan de Fuca.

Four days later the first glimpse of the perfect volcanic cone of Mt. Baker glowed pink in the rising dawn after of 88 days and 9,600 miles of sailing. "The schedule" was now a thing of the past, a guideline that had urged us onward from the volcano-shadowed waters of Chile, past the lava rivers of Hawaii's stunning Mauna Kea, and on to the waters of the Puget Sound, where I could immediately sense new adventures lying in wait, under the shadow of this volcano.

1 WWV radio Hawaii and Fort Collins Colorado, run by NOAA, broadcasts a constant time tick plus information on major weather systems, sun spot activity, and GPS satellite functions. They broadcast on 5000, 10000 and 15000 kHz. For more information look at www.nist.gov/pml/time-and-frequency-division/radio-stations/wwv/wwv-and-wwvh-digital-time-code-and-broadcast. Though threatened with closure

by budget cuts proposed by President Trump, it is still on air as I write this (2019).

35

Halfway Point



Taliesin runs along at 6 ½ knots, her working jib and main set wing and wing, the wind a steady 15 knots from the northeast. The decks are dry and warm. It's day 14 of our voyage from Ventura Harbor in California to Kiritimati, one of the Line Islands. I have no way of knowing that this will be the halfway point, but I do know I have fallen into the routine and mood that makes crossing oceans such an important part of my life. After more than 1,800 miles at sea my body has adjusted to the motion. Now I automatically move about the boat in ways that keep me from adding bruises to the collection of black and blue marks I seem to gather along my legs and thighs during the first days of every ocean passage. We've just enjoyed a full lunch, and now the cabin has been sorted out and dinner ingredients have been organized to be in easy reach when the time comes to cook. Larry is relaxing below decks, his thoughts far from sailing as he devours yet another of the stack of carefully chosen books we have been saving for this voyage. I lounge in the cockpit, ostensibly on watch, but in reality savoring the special feeling that only comes when I know we are a thousand miles away from every speck of land.

“Hey, Larry,” I call down the companionway. “Know what I like best about being where we are right now?”

He raises his head from his book and calls back, “No shopping lists?”

“I like that, but what I like even better is, absolutely no one knows where we are and no one really cares.”

Larry just chuckled at my comment. But later as we performed our evening rituals of lighting the oil lamps, checking all the gear on deck before darkness set in, and making sure there were no cans or bottles moving around under the bunk to clink and clank and wake the off-watch sleeper, he said, “I’ve been thinking about what you said. I bet very few people ever get a chance to be completely shut off from outside influences, outside pressures.” As he lay in the bunk we discussed the privilege of being able to sail away for a few months at a time, far from shops, friends, telephones, dates, and schedules, without outside radio contact, without email. This isolation can also be a challenge; offshore we find ways to entertain ourselves when the thrill of being free to do nothing at all has worn off, we read books for three or four hours at a time, we learn to make do with what is on board, which sometimes means finding substitutes for cooking ingredients that were either forgotten or have been used up, or improvising when fish make off with our store-bought lures. “Yes, it can be challenging but I agree with you, Lin,” said Larry. “I do like it out here.”

The night flies swiftly at this halfway point. Larry now lies asleep in the bunk next to my watch seat as I write this. What a contrast from the hassles of those last days before our departure from California. In spite of the endless lists and happenings that threatened to delay our departure (a book launch, a wedding, three baby arrivals, and a funeral), we did leave from Ventura within four days of the plan we had set six months before. *Taleisin* sat two inches lower in the water than normal, proof that she carried about 2,400 pounds of food and water and books (lots of really good books recommended by friends, found at the Los Angeles Book Expo, bought during visits to secondhand bookstores.) We were particularly anxious to get underway before the end of June to avoid the threat of potential hurricanes as we worked south towards the equator. According to the pilot charts, and

routing info, it is rare for eastern Pacific hurricanes to go far beyond 130 west longitude during the month of June, but in July the risk increases three-fold.

Of course the day before departure became a real circus as I hurried off to the local farmers' market to buy US\$700 worth of fresh fruit. I returned to the boat just as a local youngster who raises chickens as part of her 4H project arrived to bring me eight dozen truly fresh, never-been-washed and un-refrigerated eggs.

Larry had his hands full filling water tanks, re-storing tools and paint equipment from our final haul-out (we'd re-launched only the day before), and checking sailing gear. Then several friends showed up unexpectedly to wish us well and my whole family came down to take us out for dinner (well, not the whole family, but eleven of them). I gave up trying to get everything stowed properly and piled three boxes of provisions in the bath tub. Larry shoved six boxes of wine and several bags of assorted junk in among the sails in the lazarette. Finally, we had one last long shoreside shower and dropped into our bunk, exhausted.



Wing and Wing - For easy handling in winds under 10 knots, nothing beats “The Red Baron” our spinnaker staysail, and “Big Blue” our nylon drifter.

Departure morning there was no wind at all. As we voyage engine-free, we waited until noon when a light breeze began to tickle the flags around the harbor. Then we cast off our lines and slowly tacked clear of the last American port *Taleisin* would visit for a very long time. It was 2009, and we were heading west. Before we cleared the breakwater, we’d broken out the big blue nylon drifter (Big Blue) and the red and white stripped nylon staysail (The Red Baron) and began reaching southward.

Seven hours later, because it the wind had shifted more to the south and we had to sail close-hauled, we decided to anchor in the lee of Anacapa Island for the night. As we had often found in the past, it usually pays to say your farewells then sail away to a quieter spot to settle things into the boat before heading off to sea. This time was no different. It felt so good to be away from the dock and at anchor that we decided to stay put for another

day, get things stored properly, and have one more quiet night sleeping together. By the second morning a squeeze zone formed off the California coast and winds increased to 25 knots northwesterly. Our anchorage became seriously roly, so we took off to spend the next week running before 30- to 35-knot winds, carrying either the small working jib or staysail with triple-reefed mainsail. We had fast sailing and clocked good days of runs between 30 N and 18 N latitudes: 155, 145, 148....

Then we reached latitude 18 North and though winds eased off and days runs fell, our luck held—*just* held, I should say. The first Pacific hurricanes of the season began roaring westward. Three petered out near the Mexican coast but Hurricane Boris, packing 85-knot winds, came right at us. We changed course more to the west to put room between Boris and us. For three days we listened for on our shortwave radio to keep track of Boris' position on WWVH every six hours, plotting its progress and potential track, and trying to decide on our best tactics. I did my usual bit of worrying while Larry was his usual pragmatic self, saying, "We'll handle things when we have to." We began making storm preparations when the center of Boris was within 90 miles. Fortunately, by this time Boris had been downgraded to a tropical storm with winds of only 50 to 55 knots. We had about 25 knots of wind on the beam when we heard this latest report. The storm trysail kept us moving along and feeling ready for the remains of the storm. Six hours later Hurricane Boris had dissolved. I wasn't sad to see it gone, but in some ways I felt a kind of letdown after the exhilaration of enduring a storm. This feeling only lasted a short while, however—only until the overcast skies cleared to perfection.

I knew it wouldn't last. The inter-tropical convergence zone lay just ahead which would probably bring squalls, sail changes, heat, and humidity. Then we would begin our final approach to the islands and I would begin making lists. A list of provisions were running low by then, and there were other lists of people I should contact. There would be boat gear we should inspect, reinforce, or mend at anchor before making the next passage toward the Samoas and later into the more storm-prone waters of the Tasman Sea.

However, right now I am completely caught up with life, completely at ease in my mind. I am almost disappointed when I notice the hands of the ship's clock nearing 0400, the time when Larry will take over the watch to make sure all stays shipshape within the boundaries of our small ocean-going world.

This was the very first voyage Larry and I made using GPS; it was 2009.¹ Due to Larry's health issues, we bought two US\$100 Garmin handhelds just before our departure in late June. We continued to take sextant sights along the way; friends who perused our logbook recently had a laugh when they read, "Took round of sights to confirm GPS position."

After some 190,000 miles and 42 years of sailing without GPS, what was our reaction? Disappointment in some ways. We missed the special routine we had come to know and enjoy by navigating with a sextant. We missed the fun of trying to guess our day's run before Larry plotted the daily noon sight. We missed the reason to be out on deck waiting to catch a shot of the sun between banks of clouds and the mind exercise of pre-computing star sights. But most of all we both commented on missing the anticipation, the special joy of seeing an island or headland come clear on the horizon just when we (fingers crossed at times) expected it to. On the other hand, we appreciated the almost instant warning that there was a very strong current setting to the northwest when we were 100 miles out on our approach to Kiritimati. This let us alter course early so instead of running wing and wing we went onto a reach and lay into the island without ever having to go to windward. Previously, when we sailed through tropical waters and approached atolls such as Kiritimati, we spent a lot of time taking twice-nightly star sights, moon sights and extra sun sights to keep track of the currents.

Did the GPS make us feel safer? In a small way it did the opposite. Now we had to remind ourselves that the ease of finding our position could lure us into cutting corners as we passed headlands or reefs, or might even tempt us to enter a new anchorage at night rather than heaving-to to wait for daylight. The opening page on the GPS says it all: *Warning! All data is*

presented for reference only. You assume total responsibility and risk associated with using this device. Which means that for us, even with GPS on board, we still felt the best way to ensure our own success was to maintain the careful attention to detail that we'd come to know as our habit—to avoid cutting those corners, to heave to at night so as to enter an unfamiliar anchorage at dawn. To use our heads and our guts, as we'd done all these years together.

I have been voyaging on a far different vessel the past year, one with so-called modern navigation gear, including GPS, chart plotter, radar, and AIS. I still miss the sense of connectedness to the universe and the sea around me, the pleasant daily routine, the excitement of a good landfall aided only by a sextant and paper charts. I am also reminded of the potential dangers of depending on electronics.

One thing I have learned is that the GPS aspect of a chart plotter is extremely accurate in relationship to your vessel's latitude and longitude. Unfortunately, the charts are less so. Those charts for less traveled areas of the world can be off by two or three miles. Some charts are accurate in certain areas but inaccurate on the far side of the page. Thus, for times when we have been caught in limited visibility such as during rain squalls or, more recently, when heavy smoke from rampant bush fires in Tasmania cut our visibility to less than 200 feet, I have come to appreciate the absolute accuracy of radar. I have learned to turn on the radar to verify our position in relationship to nearby land, even if my track on the plotter says I am exactly in the middle of a channel.

I also like being able to track other vessels using the radar. Even more useful is being able to track rain squalls and determine their course—will they miss us, should I get started taking in sail now, or do I have time to call someone up on deck to help?

On the other hand, I would caution against relying too heavily on the AIS Vessel Tracking system. It is no replacement or substitute for radar and a very good lookout. Over the past 9,000 miles I have noted that very few smaller vessels outside the US carry AIS or, if they do, few turn on their

transponder. Only commercial ships over 300 tons are required to carry and use AIS at all times, but many from less wealthy nations do not abide completely by the rules. Furthermore, several fishermen have told us they turn theirs off when they are stopped to work their nets or lines and few locally sailed yachts use AIS. Those that do often have receivers but not responders.

Smartphones have also changed the way sailors approach navigation. Besides the typical gear most sailboats carry—from GPS to AIS—I find many cruising sailboats these days using smartphone navigation as well. Screen addiction may come to jeopardize good sailing habits. Will we forget to stand serious night watches? Will we forget to get clear of visual obstructions and truly look around the horizon?

How often do you need to take a serious look around the horizon? I try to stick to the routine I lived with on *Taleisin*, doing a real good look around the horizon every 11 to 12 minutes. Larry and I chose this interval after timing several dozen ships and tracking how long it took from the time they appeared on the horizon until they were alongside us. But it isn't just big ships that you need to watch for. In my latest book, *Taleisin's Tales*², I relate how we came within feet of hitting a small open fishing boat 45 miles south of Western Samoa. We were moving at about 6 ½ knots.

Our eleven-minute timer had just gone off. I stood up from where I'd been relaxing in the cockpit and noticed one of the four fisherman lighting a cigarette and waving it in the air. I was able to shove the tiller hard over just in time to avoid a collision.

¹ We'd used Loran and the early precursors to satnav during delivery jobs in the 1980s but we didn't have the power supply, financial slack nor, until this voyage, any interest in using either on board our own boats.

² *Taleisin's Tales: Sailing Towards the Southern Cross*, L&L Pardey Publications 2017



SECTION IX

The Next Stages of a Voyaging Life

I often thought of writing an article called ‘The Far Side of Cruising.’ Through the years I’d watched as friends were forced to stop wandering by finances, family problems, or age-related concerns—or because one or the other became tired of moving onward. As I gathered notes, I’d told myself it would be a way to help people who had been cruising long-term by giving them an insight into how others handled the transition from life afloat to life on shore, or at least life in a static place. But as I look back I realize what I really was trying to do was figure out how I personally would handle the next stages in my life.

The following chapters show the answer is far different from anything I might have imagined.

Lessons Cruising Taught Me



Life throws its rough moments at you. I am in the midst of one right now as I help Larry through the late stages of Parkinson's disease at our home base at Kawau Island here in New Zealand. As I stand on the end of the jetty watching Noel and Litara Barrott sail *Sina* through the entrance to the cove in 35 knots of breeze, I recall something Larry said when we all shared an anchorage at Puerto Montt, after we'd successfully sailed back out into the Atlantic, then headed south of Cape Horn before beating north past the wind-blasted, rock-strewn lee shore of Chilean Patagonia. Noel and Litara, with their daughter Sina on board, had taken a far different route, exploring the glaciers and *senos* (fiords) of the Beagle Canal before escaping into the open waters of the Pacific Ocean through the Trinidad Canal. The first hours of that reunion were spent rehashing the four days of hurricane-force winds each of us had encountered, just after sailing clear of the Screaming 50s. Larry summed up our mutual heavy-weather stories by saying, "Only good thing about storms—they teach you patience."

The first time we had all met and shared an anchorage was only a month prior, in the southern reaches of the Beagle Canal. Stormy weather

had forced us to seek shelter at the Chilean outpost of Puerto Williams to wait for a break before we headed back out into the Southern Atlantic for a second attempt at doubling Cape Horn on board *Taleisin*. Noel and Litara were headed home towards New Zealand via the canals of southern Chile in their handsome self-built 53-foot yawl after a voyage to Iceland. As Larry and Noel both love wooden boatbuilding almost as much as they love sailing, the bond was immediate. We were delighted to meet Noel and Litara not once but twice in the high-latitude sailing of Patagonia. And now here they are, dropping an anchor in my cove. And here I am, reflecting on Larry's wisdom about storms, and the lessons we learn along the way.

EVERYTHING PASSES

Strangely, we actually found the storms we encountered at sea easier to endure than some of the storms that kept us harbor-bound in foreign ports. However, in each case, as I look back I realize the time did slide by and often created the best sense of shared purpose. I have memories of the encouragement we gave each other during stormy times at sea, reminding each other we had worked hard to prepare ourselves and our boat to face these conditions and now had a chance to test our endurance and patience. And sure enough, when the winds abated and we sailed into calmer waters I remember the feeling of confidence gained and the sense of accomplishment.

Calms pass, too. That is a lesson that slowly grows in importance the longer you cruise. To some cruisers, calms represent frustration. But to others who have learned to put aside schedules, calms can be a time of quiet introspection. To Larry and me, cruising engine-free as we did, calms at sea were often our favorite times. Time to forget about sail trimming, to catch up with simple onboard chores so when we reached shore we had little left on our work list. Though we were rarely truly becalmed for more than a few hours at a time (i.e., couldn't keep the boat moving even with our largest nylon sails), we once had several days of complete calm as we crossed the Arabian Sea. There was so little wind that the 2,200-mile passage took

almost 36 days. So how does this translate to a useful lesson? Once again the lesson I learned is: all calms eventually pass. Now, when I find myself looking at my calendar and thinking, “Not much interesting planned for the next while,” instead of rushing about looking for something to fill my days I remind myself to sit back, relax, and drift with the moment.

IT IS IMPORTANT SOMETIMES TO DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING

When we were cruising through the islands of Maine, I was invited to crew on a race boat with several very high-powered businessmen. For four out of the five days of the regatta, we were surrounded by heavy fog. One day, when we’d been sitting on the rail for several hours keeping quiet as possible to ensure we would hear any approaching boat, nothing at all to look at but a sheet of grey dripping fog, the crewman next to me stated, “If someone caught me sitting and staring at a blank wall for two or three hours at a time they’d say I’d gone crazy. But if they saw me right now they’d just say, *he’s sailing.*” It reminded me of times I didn’t feel the need to fill the hours with activity: night watches, or times when Larry was taking a daytime nap and I didn’t particularly feel like reading a book. The notion of doing nothing just because we were sailing turned into doing something. This too is a useful lesson cruising taught me. It is okay to sometimes do absolutely nothing, to let your mind rest or wander lazily among dozens of thoughts that would otherwise be drowned out in the noise of everyday life. Some truly refreshing and original ideas have occurred to me because I brought this practice to shore with me.

BE SPONTANEOUS

We’d risen early one morning, worked free of the reef surrounding Huahine. We were bound towards the French Polynesian Island of Raiatea. This was the second time we’d set off to make this 26-mile passage. The first time we’d been becalmed exactly halfway across. Then the normal easterly tradewinds reversed and came in strong from the west. With dark falling, we decided it would be prudent to run back to Huahine and wait for

a favorable wind and full daylight to work through the reefs and coral heads surrounding the anchorage we wanted to reach in Raiatea. Now two days later we were having a wonderful sail, with no sign of faltering tradewinds. We'd been under way for just two hours when we noticed familiar-looking sails approaching from the west. Soon two friends we'd first met a year previously in Mexico were alongside. "We've been working our tails off fixing boats for the charter fleet in Raiatea," Mike called as we hove to a few dozen yards from each other. "Headed for Huahine to rent some motor scooters, catch up with some friends at the south of the island, do some diving, have a few days' fun." Mike continued, "Why don't you turn around, come and play with us?" I didn't have time to protest before Larry yelled, "Sure thing!" A week later, as we reached easily (and this time successfully) toward Raiatea, we had a fine time talking about the people Mike had introduced us to, Polynesians who welcomed us into their home, shared their meals, took us out fishing on the reef, and gave us an insight into their culture.

When we first set off cruising and first came across opportunities like this, I remember remarking to Larry that it was easy to change plans because we didn't really have any: just the desire to set sail and explore for four or five months. But plans did form and sometimes I had to remember how important that spontaneity—that willingness to change plans—could be as we cruised. It was definitely a lesson we brought to our onshore life.

DON'T BE TOO DETERMINED

In a way, this lesson goes hand-in-hand with the previous one. We'd had a fast, wet, windy, and squall-prone run across the Indian Ocean, bound for the intriguingly isolated and deserted atolls of Chagos Archipelago. It was a destination that had been on our wish list for years. When we were about 400 miles from the unmarked, un-lit atolls, the weather became even more unstable. Squalls with torrential rain overtook us sometimes twice in an hour, with 15- to 20-foot following seas and grey and cloudy skies and low visibility between the squalls. "I'm just not willing to risk running

down on a maze of underwater atolls in these conditions,” Larry said that evening. “We wouldn’t know we were in danger until we were already on top of a reef. Let’s slow the boat down and hope this weather system passes over us.”

We reefed down to just a storm trysail. Our speed dropped from 7.4 knots to about 4.5 knots. Two days later we were within 125 miles of the first underwater reef we had to negotiate to reach a safe anchorage. The weather had not improved. “Okay, let’s heave to and wait for things to change,” I suggested. For two days we lay hove-to. Life was not uncomfortable; I didn’t resent the wait. But on the third morning, with squalls coming through just as often and the barometer unchanged, I agreed when Larry stated, “I don’t think Chagos is in the cards for us this time, let’s go for a plan B solution. Let’s reach south toward Rodriguez Island.”

A day later we sailed out of the near-gale force winds, squalls and greyness into bright sunshine. Four days later we were secured alongside a clean, stone quay with palm fronds swaying in the breeze, right in the center of the capital of Rodriguez Island. We were soon to be enmeshed in one of the more memorable times in our cruising lives. And as an affirming footnote, the Rodriguez weather station, which tracks Indian Ocean weather systems, recorded almost three more weeks of heavy cloud cover, squalls, and near-gale force winds over Chagos.

Yes, it is a lesson we have carried into non- sailing situations, realizing when to step back and rethink a project, a plan, or scheme, to take a different tack or even admit that something just isn’t going to work and it is time to let go and head in a new direction.¹

DON’T LET YOUR SCHEDULE TURN INTO A DEMON SCHEDULE

Feeling compelled to stick to schedules while you cruise can add tremendous pressures as the previous chapter clearly illustrates. The desire to tell friends and family (and even yourself) exactly where you hope to be next week, next month, or even next year can force you to move on just when you are finally settling into the best cruising grounds you’ve ever

encountered. When you are “out there,” it is easy to spot and avoid this “schedule” trap. It is far harder on shore. I actually had to learn the world did not end when I had to call and re-schedule an appointment, or suggest another date for getting together with friends, or even send my regrets and miss a party.

One more cruising lesson that has been well worth remembering.

THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON OF ALL: TAKE TIME TO BUILD AND CULTIVATE FRIENDSHIPS

Everyone comments about the amazing friendships that develop when you are cruising. I’ve heard explanations such as, “I had something in common with everyone I met.” Or, “Everyone was so willing to be helpful, with information, ideas...” But I think the real reasons we found it so easy to make quick and lasting connections with people when we headed out cruising was that we actually took the time to do so and, once we’d come to know someone, we went out of our way to spend time with them. I can recall hundreds of afternoons when we lounged in our cockpit or lazed on the foreshore with someone we’d just met—other sailors, fishermen, the local couple we’d just met while we were onshore. It was not uncommon to invite locals on board for their very first visit to a yacht. Once we had settled in the cockpit, the only distractions were the birds flying overhead, the fish breaking the surface, maybe a boatman rowing past. This uninterrupted time let us leisurely find the common ground that tends to make all people appear helpful, friendly, interesting. These afternoons sometimes stretched right through dinner and late into the evening. We almost always felt the time had been well spent. And once we’d made these new friends, we went out of our way to spend lots of time with them over the next days, knowing we might not ever get to spend time with them again. This is harder to do on shore but I try to carry this cruising lesson with me, even now, by making extra time for new people I meet, turning off my telephone, loosening up any schedules, being open to each person who comes into my life.

Cruising taught me many lessons, and when I use them life seems to flow more smoothly. The hard part is recalling them through the hustle of shore-side life.

But today I do remember to use one of these lessons. I hadn't expected Noel and Litara to sail in, and I have a list of "important" things that need doing. But, instead of being impatient, I mentally reprioritize plans as I watch them row toward me. I have no qualms about putting everything aside for a day, or even two, to devote myself to doing nothing but enjoying their company.

[1](#) Several months later in Southern Africa we met two sailors who had been bound from Malaysia towards Chagos just a week after us. They had radar and GPS on board and in spite of the weather carried on, only to end up hitting the exact reef that had worried us most. They were fortunate to get their boat free after three weeks of very hard work. Repairing the damage once they reached South Africa cost them a year's cruising funds.

37

Transition



Dull grey sky, wind gusting to 30 knots, white cresting seas breaking over the rocks a half mile ahead of *Taleisin*. One minute I feel fine, the next sweat covers my brow and my stomach begins to churn. I move quickly to the leeward side of the cockpit and turn my back to hide my embarrassment. Seasick? How can I be? *Taleisin* lies steady, attached to her mooring just a hundred yards from the jetty leading to our boat shop and home base on Kawau Island in New Zealand. The fresh breeze does me some good, but I'm still not ready to turn around to the happy smiles in the cockpit.

It takes a few moments to realize it is my visitor's words that have brought on my nausea. "I want to buy your boat. She is exactly what I need!" This simple statement has forced me to confront reality.

Several months previously, when I grumbled because 29-foot 9-inch *Taleisin* was getting barnacles on her bottom and needed a scrub and coat of antifouling paint, Larry said, "I can't help you take care of her anymore, Lin. It's time to find new owners." I tried to ignore his words as I checked the tide book and chose a date to bring her onto our tidal grid. But Larry has always been the pragmatist in our family. "I've done everything I've ever

dreamed of doing in my life, taken that boat everywhere we wanted to,” he stated. “It’s time to let go.”

I was far more reluctant to sign listing papers that would reduce the collection of fine timbers, bronze, lead, sail fabric, rope, 7,600 hours of hard work plus 31 years’ worth of voyaging memories to the vulgarity of a fist full of dollars. I was ready as ever to head out to sea, but had to acknowledge the inroads Parkinson’s disease was making on Larry’s mobility. As I had many times in the past, I retreated to the boat, sandpaper in hand, and lost myself in the non-challenging, almost Zen-like rhythm of prepping the varnished cabin sides and hatches for their twice-yearly coat of varnish.

Larry made his way slowly and carefully out the long jetty to the pontoon/work berth where *Taleisin* lay, then sat on the deck box in quiet companionship. “Remember the foundry woman who cast these bronze port lights for us?” I asked as I sanded carefully around the verdigris-colored silicon bronze rims. “Wonder if a new owner would appreciate the beautiful color they turn? Wonder if they’d understand why you built these corner posts without any dovetails—the reason you built this raised cove for the cabin sides?”

“They’ll appreciate it because you’ll tell them about every single detail,” Larry quipped before he turned to head back toward the house. Soon I was lost in what some for some might be a chore but for me was a natural moment in the cycle of my year; I carefully ran a line of masking tape around the bronze fittings and the deck edges below the cabin sides, then dusted, and inspected the work area before laying on the varnish as I’d done twice yearly at least 60 times for *Taleisin*, 30 or more times for her baby sister-ship, the 24-foot 4-inch *Seraffyn*.

I added my signature to the brokerage papers later that evening. The listing seemed to go viral and brought forth a flurry of warm-hearted notes from friends and friends-we-haven’t-met-yet, each commiserating over this milestone in our lives. Then a serious offer arrived. But neither of us had any qualms as we turned it down. It came from someone 75 years old (Larry’s age) who wanted a pretty boat to grace the jetty at his waterfront

home. “She can sit right here looking pretty and gracing our waterfront home,” Larry stated. “We don’t have to sell her ever, so we’ll wait until we find someone who wants her for the right reasons.”

Now two people showed up who undeniably fit that description: young, eager to get away from their computer-driven, office-bound lives; excited about learning the finer points of sailing; and looking for the challenge of a completely new adventure. Eben and Annie Bryns arrived at our jetty and asked to be shown on board. “I know it’s bad negotiating to say this, but I have to have this boat,” the husband commented as he climbed on board the ferry later that afternoon, bound for the mainland. I walked up to the house, still feeling tinges of nausea and glad to be on my own for a few minutes before I joined Larry. “I think they are very serious,” I told him. “I watched the way he looked at the details, asked the right questions. She was so comfortable moving around on deck, settled onto the settees down below as if she had been there before. But wonder if I want anyone else sailing off with my dreams.”

A month later I greeted *Taleisin’s* suitor as he climbed off the ferry once more. Together we guided the boat onto the tidal grid next to the boat shop. My mind was put ever more at ease as I watched how intently and carefully the potential next caretaker of my dream-ship handled her lines, how he paused to run his hand over her paintwork. Papers had been signed; the surveyor was due in a few hours. I stopped the flood of questions by heading into the boat shop to point out the spare gear that we’d carried whenever we left on a voyage, the extra set of flapper valves for the big Edson pump, the gasket material for port lights and hatches, extra mooring lines, a spare anchor rode.

Minutes after the surveyor arrived, I retreated to the house. “You’re worried about someone criticizing your baby, aren’t you?” Larry stated. I left him seated at his favorite spot next to the big front window of the cottage and went to hide in my office, pretending to work as I listened to the endless tap-tap-tapping of the surveyor’s hammer. I got up a half dozen times to walk down and see what was happening, then forced myself to go back to my office, sit down, and wait. Four hours later Ray Beale, a well-

respected Kiwi boat builder/designer walked up the path to say *Taleisin* was just as he'd expected her to be. His list of suggested upgrades was exactly the same as we'd listed. "Gave Eben a few tips on ensuring she stays in good shape," Ray said. "He is like a sponge, soaking up everything I tell him."

Before the ferry pulled away, Eben made it clear he wanted to solidify a date for the formal sea-trials, the final step required by our broker before the sale could be signed off.

I was surprised to find how different my feelings were as I watched the ferry leave the cove this time. No longer did the idea of parting with *Taleisin* upset me. Instead, as I walked back toward the house, I began making a list in my head: give Eben and Annie a different riggers bag—can't let go of the one Jay Greer made for us 45 years ago; get out all the wood plug cutters Larry used—those should go with the boat; dig out the spare set of snatch blocks we bought at a swap meet. I walked past *Taleisin*, sitting on the tidal grid. "Can't take her out with any slime on her bottom," I thought. "Want them to see how she shines in light winds."

"I like Eben's attitude. He seems eager to learn," Larry stated when I got up to the house. "She's a young person's boat—if he takes care of her, she'll take care of him."

It was almost three weeks before all of us set out for sea-trials. I'd delayed to give me time to scrub *Taleisin*'s bottom. Then weather delayed us. Now, in spite of the predicted showers and low clouds, we were finally on board, with winds fair for an easy run out of the cove. Larry had not been sailing on *Taleisin* for almost two years, but the minute he had the tiller in his hand, the years seemed to peel away.

Once we were clear of the cove, the wind steadied at 15 knots. I worked with Eben and Annie, showing them how to douse the staysail and then haul up the lapper, pointing out details, explaining why winches were mounted thus, which cleat I used for each line. Then Larry called for someone to sheet in the sails. He headed *Taleisin* close to the wind, steering to catch each lift. I stood on the foredeck watching him—at home, relaxed. I was seeing the man who had steadied, encouraged, and challenged me as

we crossed and crisscrossed almost every ocean in the world together. For a few brief moments, I felt as if we were making a mistake. Then Larry called out to Eben, “Come on, take the helm of your boat. See how great she feels.” And just like that, he became the mentor, coaching, not nagging—just pointing out the first signs the boat was too close to the wind, the need to snug up the mainsail just a bit, and the broken pattern that showed a stronger gust of wind on the water ahead. “Come on up to the fast end of the boat,” I suggested to Annie. She followed me onto the foredeck where the boat always seems to be moving faster than in the cockpit. As we shared a quiet moment I sensed she was both eager and just a bit concerned about the step she was on the verge of taking, one that would sever her from the “normal world” as she and Eben spent the next year exploring the waters of New Zealand under sail.

Fog, a rare thing in our part of the world, began to obscure the land ahead. “Let’s turn back,” Larry said. I could see he was tiring and fighting to keep his balance, fighting to keep his anxiety under control. I could see the perfect combination of disappointment and understanding in the eyes of our two guests (for until it was formally their boat, they were truly guests). Far too soon for me, we were back at our jetty. To make up for their disappointment in having only a few hours of sailing, I began showing Eben and Annie how we used each piece of gear, sharing the stories of mishaps and adventures that had shaped the decision behind each upgrade we’d done. Then I stopped myself, feeling like I was being an over-whelming chatterbox. “Show me more, tell me more,” *Taleisin*’s new guardians asked.

Two months after the sea trials, *Taleisin* still sits on her mooring in North Cove. Each morning Larry and I watch her swinging the breeze, hoping the gulls and migrating terns choose to land on any boat but her. She’ll stay right where she is through the southern summer and into autumn, a perfect place for her new owners to gain skills and come to love her by sailing to the protected coves that surround this island.

Eben, Annie, and I have been out sailing a few more times. They have spent weekends on board, familiarizing themselves with each hidden storage area. Eben has been using our shop to disassemble and come to

know how various blocks and winches work as together we oil and grease gear that has grown a bit stiff through lack of use since Larry and I made our last ocean passage three years ago. Now it is Eben who is making the inevitable lists that are part of any sailors' life, shopping for the bits and pieces to make *Taleisin* his dream-ship.

And now the transition is almost complete. Instead of feeling like I am experiencing the end of a story, one that began when we cut down seven trees on a farm in Virginia more than four decades ago, I feel like this is just the prequel to a tale that can carry on through another generation—or maybe two or three if Larry and I really did build *Taleisin* to last a hundred years.¹

¹ For more about *Taleisin*'s life under the hands of Eben and Annie, go to taleisin.com.

Compromise



The waters around me sparkle in the late afternoon sunlight. I just spotted the spouting of a small pod of orca whales. They are swimming past the entrance to Bostoquet Bay at the southern end of Kawau Island where we lay at anchor. The skipper and Daniel are off skin diving. As I lounge in the cockpit I am trying to decide if I want to go for a row, or read a book, or do nothing at all. We are just out for the weekend. It is a chance to show off my favorite spots around the island that has been my home base for almost 35 years.

As I contemplate the now familiar landscape, I think back to when Larry and I sailed into Opuia for the first time back in 1985 to rendezvous with Eric and Susan Hiscock. For the previous few years, they had been urging us to come visit New Zealand. Soon after we arrived and mentioned we might like to spend not only the summer season but winter too, before pushing on further west, Susan stated, “Sail on down to North Cove on Kawau Island. We spent a winter there and loved it.” We had followed her suggestion and it was love at first sight. Then, as luck would have it, a derelict waterfront property, complete with a licensed boat shop, became available at a truly bargain basement price. In fact, it was just US\$200 more than we had put

away from selling our first cruising boat *Seraffyn*. Though I had been reluctant to own any property, Larry had commented, “Not for now, but for when we get too old to want to wander anymore.” Now, as I contemplate how well this has worked out I am amazed at just how prescient he had been.

Now, as another hour passes, I get out my note pad and continue adding item after item to my ever-present work list as we prepare for a voyage north to the tropics. This will all be familiar to me—the provisioning, the preparation, both mental and physical. And yet, I’m about to embark on something entirely new because Larry, my sailing partner of 47-plus years, has now been in full-time care for a few years, a victim of the dementia that is the saddest part of Parkinson’s disease.



A few years before we sold *Taleisin*, Larry bought me a surprise birthday gift, this lovely little daysailer *Felicity*. She is a Herreshoff 12 ½ (actually, the Bullseye edition of the 15-foot keelboat designed in 1914). With her 750-pound lead keel she is amazingly stable and proved a great way for me to get out sailing on my own.

I'd come to enjoy living on my own but found I really missed sailing, not just sailing for a day, but sailing across oceans to explore new destinations. So, in mid-May I will close up my cottage and set sail for Australia on board 40-foot *Sahula*. It has been nine years since I last crossed an ocean and I am both eager and a bit apprehensive. My apprehension is caused both by sailing with someone I am only getting to know and also by *Sahula* being very different from the two boats I've previously sailed around the world, the major difference being: she has an engine. Second in importance, she has a sheltered cockpit with a permanent bimini and transparent, removable side-curtains. Equal in importance to that is the fact that she was built and outfitted for tall singlehandlers.

Before agreeing to set sail on this extended voyage, I'd joined David Haigh, an Australian who was only a few thousand miles away from completing an 11-year circumnavigation, on a voyage to Fiordland then around the bottom of New Zealand and back to North Cove, a distance of almost 1,500 miles. One day, when we were leaving Dunedin, running fast over a relatively rough sea, sails wing and wing, David asked me to take the helm while he went forward to secure the anchor more tightly in the bow roller. I jokingly said, "Hold on tight. Hate to see you go overboard."



Everything about this sized boat was easy for me on my own: sailing, cleaning, even anti-fouling her bottom.

David stopped and turned to me, “And what would you do if I did go overboard?” I quickly answered, “I’d gybe the boat, leave the jib backed, go onto a close reach...” Before I said one more word, he said, “No, Lin. First you turn on the engine!”

Sailing with an engine has added many new aspects to my life. Because it doesn’t require hoisting sails and cranking in the anchor by hand, I no longer want to anchor well away from other boats just in case it becomes necessary to leave in a hurry if the wind shifts. I no longer have to think twice about changing anchorages if someone comes and drops their hook too close to us. But there are drawbacks to having the engine, too—besides the

noise. I miss sitting and waiting for a breeze to fill in. Those were special times when, for a few hours (rarely more than a day), Larry and I felt comfortably at home as we waited for wind. I'd get out some mending, or clean a few lockers, or stitch up a sail that was showing some wear. The day would flit by just like a lazy Sunday afternoon spent in a shoreside home. Then there would be the magic of seeing the first signs of a breeze: the water to windward darkening, or a cloud aloft beginning to move. And the exhilaration of feeling the boat beginning to skitter across almost flat water, the feeling that she was picking up her skirts and dancing along as the wind began to grow.

My reaction to the enclosed cockpit is a lot like my reaction to sailing on a vessel with an engine. Six days out of Opuā, when it was still wintery cold and blowing half a gale, when heavy spray flew across the deck but didn't hit me because the roll-down windows provided shelter, I loved the cockpit. No need to be wrapped up in foul weather gear, no need to have a towel nearby to wipe salt spray off my face and out of my eyes. But there was something else I am not used to—I felt cut off from the night, one of my favorite times at sea. I also felt cut off from the sails. Instead of glancing up dozens of times each day to check the trim, to be sure nothing was chafing, I now had to remind myself to get clear of the permanent dodger and bimini cover to check all three sails out properly. Just as important, I couldn't see the stars, the moon, the movement of the clouds—without getting out of the cockpit.



Though I can appreciate the physical comfort offered by *Sahula's* bimini and cockpit curtains, it does cut me off from the night skies, and makes it far harder to see the set of the sails.

The third distinct difference between my previous boats and *Sahula* is one that will always present a bit of a problem. All the gear is designed to be handled by someone who is over six feet tall. I am two inches under five feet. One immediate addition to the boat was a sturdy plastic folding step which is very handy in port. Without it I couldn't reach the utensil rack or the top shelf of the galley lockers, or the bottom of the refrigeration cabinet. But that step doesn't work on deck. Thus, I have to depend on David to reef the mainsail, put the sail covers on, and half a dozen other chores I could do for myself on boats that were actually built to accommodate my height. In some ways I resent losing my sense of independence. But the other side of the coin is, it makes us have to work together more closely, makes us look

towards ideas that would resolve this problem without requiring too many changes to the boat.

As our departure date draws nearer, as I become ever more familiar with this boat and her owner, I realize I am very happy I was invited to and accepted the chance to sail on board *Sahula*. Of course that means I am having to make another compromise—being away from North Cove and my raft of Kawau Island friends for several months at a time, away from people who helped me through the rough six years of Larry's decline and then urged me to grab a chance to sail again. As much as I love crossing oceans, I also know I'll miss being "at home." My closest friends keep reminding me, "When you are well over 70, you don't have much time to waste. There will be plenty of time later to be *at home*."

And now we are reaching across the Hauraki Gulf towards Great Barrier Island in a soft easterly breeze and I'll amend that to say, "Whatever age you are, don't wait. Compromise if you have to, but get out sailing."

If It Was Easy...



“Why is this so difficult?” I keep asking myself. “I’ve done this literally dozens of times before.”

Autumn is winding down. We have to set sail before the onset of winter gales. We’ve set a departure date and it is only five days away. As I look out of my office window to see David wheeling yet another load of gear down the jetty I remind myself I know the steps to take.

Sahula is looking ever more disheveled as gear and provisions are loaded onto her deck. I feel slightly guilty that I can’t help David. But I am on overload, beaver away in my office as I try to disengage myself from the business and community projects that have filled my life for the past seven years. I’ll miss the challenge of “fighting city hall” or putting on island social events with the team of islanders who have become close friends. But now I’ve been invited to join David as he sails to Fiji, Vanuatu, and then on towards Townsville, Australia, where he will complete his circumnavigation, I don’t want to pass up this chance.

As I look over my list I remind myself that setting sail with David and leaving New Zealand both add extra stress to my situation. I’d spent almost five decades sailing, adventuring, and working with Larry. Together we’d

built two of the boats we used to explore the farthest reaches of the world. We'd grown into a well-oiled sailing team. The boats we'd sailed had been custom tailored to my diminutive size (and strength.) Now I have committed myself to sail off across one of the more boisterous of oceans with a man who I'd only recently come to know, on a boat that was far different than I was used to, a boat fitted out to suit a six-foot-one-inch-tall singlehander, and I'd be doing it at an age when I knew I was not as agile as I'd once been. And there was an even bigger problem: I was leaving Larry behind.

After helping Larry through several years of ever-worsening Parkinsonian Dementia, the time came when I needed professional assistance. I'd searched for and found an excellent facility with warm-hearted and well-trained staff. Larry had been there for more than a year. His caretakers plus family and friends urged me to take this leap, assuring me that if Larry could comprehend and speak, he'd join their chorus. But still I had concerns as, for the first time ever, there would be possibly weeks at a time when I could not jump on a plane and rush back to be at Larry's side should there be any way I could make his life easier.

Additionally, there was the more universal complication of putting any shore-side life on hold; turning over my publishing business so the authors and their new publisher were comfortable; securing the house, boat yard, three boats, the car; shutting off the phones; relinquishing the responsibilities I've taken on in my very supportive small island community.

"If it's this hard for me, just imagine what it must be like for people who are trying to get away the very first time," I thought as I crossed one chore off my list then added two more. I remembered one cruising couple who came up to me after a seminar at the 2017 Annapolis boat show. "We've sold the house, bought the boat," said the woman. "Now my boss has offered me a really tempting bonus to stay on and help him on a special

project. He says I am the only person he knows with the skills to handle it. It would be just six months more. That would give Doug more time to make sure the boat is ready to go. What would you do?" I could remember my answer—it was similar to the one I'd given to dozens of almost-ready- to-go voyagers. "Your boss isn't trying to help you out. He's trying to keep you right where you are so he doesn't have to spend the time and money training someone else. Grab your chance and go now while both of you are healthy and eager."

I am still satisfied with the answer I gave that day. But armed with my current dilemma, I might have added, "Even for those young enough to appear free of responsibilities, even for those folks who seem to have all the money they could need, breaking away at any time in your life is not easy." I recall the very first time Larry and I actually had to make the break from shore life. We owned almost nothing other than the 24-foot 4-inch boat we'd just finished building. As soon as *Seraffyn* was launched we moved on board to avoid paying rent, so had no home to dispose of and few possessions to consider. Larry was a professional sailor with several ocean passages under his belt so there was little concern about his skill level. Armed with his experience maintaining charter boats, we'd decided on a minimalist approach to control our budget, thus had very little to shop for or install. We had enough money in the bank for five or six months of cruising and the offer of interesting jobs if or when we decided to sail back to Newport Beach. Then someone offered us a contract that could have, with just six or eight months' work, netted us enough money to keep cruising for four or five years. Of course our compatriots said we'd be crazy to turn it down. My parents were thrilled at the idea that I might not leave so soon, or maybe have time to reconsider and not go at all. Larry and I spent two restless weeks making lists of pros and cons. Then I remembered a small book by a pop philosopher, *The Wisdom of Insecurity*. "When you reach the figure that you once felt would be enough," Alan Watts explained, "you'll worry about losing it or your needs changing so it might not be sufficient." I read this to Larry one morning and that settled it; we left with what we had and never once looked back.

Now, as I contemplate the next items on my list, I realize that the financial issue may be one of the easier parts of breaking free because you can put the facts and figures down on paper. The really difficult items on my list are mostly done. I've resigned as secretary/treasurer for the local boating club—one I was emotionally involved with as I'd helped start it four years previously; I've turned over my duties as elected representative for my Kawai Island community. I've spoken with many potential voyagers who, at this stage in their plan, begin to have doubts. "Am I being irresponsible?" some have asked. Others said, "Everyone will be disappointed in me" or, "Who will take over if I leave?" Their worries, which I have been feeling the past few weeks, might reflect a deeper concern, which we all inevitably feel: Will we actually be missed; will we ever feel as important, can we ever return and get involved in the same meaningful way?

Then there are the final farewells. Friends, family. By this stage you have made it clear you are going sailing. But few non-cruisers will realize you have set a date and you have to stick to it. There is nothing quite so difficult as phone calls like the one I had to make yesterday. "As much as I'd like to help you celebrate the fact that you have been named on the Queen's Birthday Honors List," I told Leanne, a close island friend, "David and I can't delay our departure for a week." In 2008, Larry and I got caught up in almost exactly the same situation when, at the end of our second circumnavigation, we delayed our departure from Southern California for the first leg of our voyage towards New Zealand via the Line Islands for six weeks to take part in my niece's wedding. I tried to say no. But my family had all the good arguments, "You might not be back for a long, long time. You've missed so many fun family celebrations...." So we took the easy way out (saying yes) and suffered the consequences. Because of that delay, we ended up right in the track of Boris, a relatively early hurricane that season, seven days out of Ventura, California. Boris crossed from Mexico to Baja California then headed offshore toward Hawaii and fortunately was downgraded to a tropical storm 90 miles before it hit us.

I notice David heading back towards the boatshed with an empty wheel barrow and realize it is growing dark. As I close down my computer, I contemplate how much we still have to do before our departure—and then how more difficult breaking away must be for someone with a complicated boat, or with new grandchildren, or with any further encumbrances. Yes, the transition from land to sea is difficult, but as I head over to the house for sundowners, one of Larry’s favorite quips comes to mind. “If it was easy, everyone would be doing it.”

Afterword



If you have read this book from start to finish, you are probably tired of the word *self-sufficient*. Clearly, Larry and I found self-sufficiency offered many rewards as we sailed. But we also found it had its pitfalls.

What surprises most people is that saving money is not the topmost reward from trying to be self-sufficient. When you simplify your sailing life so you can repair or rebuild almost everything you need on board, you'll end up with much more free time. Consider how long it takes to sail to the port where there's a good diesel mechanic, then locate him and arrange for the work to be done. Then there is the wait for parts to be shipped in because the supply house rarely has them on hand. It's not the least bit unusual to see cruising boats tied up for three months in steaming hot Singapore or wind-racked Pago Pago while mechanics swarm over the boat or, worse yet, don't show up at all.

Added to the time and cost is the frustration of putting up with service people who may not speak your language and will likely not respect your

boat as much as you do. Even more frustrating is the insecurity of knowing someone else is controlling your fate. If you are stuck in a foreign port because of a breakdown you can't repair yourself, any one of these frustrations can tip the load so you begin to wonder, "Who ever said cruising is fun?"

Once you decide for self-sufficiency you can learn to grab hold of these same problems and personally do something about them. You'll make mistakes, you'll get dirty, you may even lose money, but every time you attempt your own repairs you'll learn something new. When we first decided to try re-cutting a staysail that flogged at the leech we proudly hoisted the sail and found we'd sewn the tape back on too loosely. It looked like a ruffled skirt edge. So we had to remove each stitch. But this time we used a regular desk-type stapler, stapled the leech tape in place, hoisted the sail, adjusted the tape a few times, *then* stitched it in place. Our success on this job led to building our own 135-percent genoa from pre-cut panels supplied by a sailmaking friend at half the cost of a finished sail.

It's this growing sense of self-confidence that makes successful offshore sailors. As you build your own boat or learn to repair it and outfit it yourself, you become aware of just how much work is involved. This leads to finding ways to prevent problems. You'll learn to change leads which cause chafe instead of constantly repairing chafe-related problems on woodwork, spars, or sails. Once you've repaired your own smashed toe rail you'll learn to come alongside docks more carefully. I know I rarely learn a lesson if I pay to have my mistakes repaired. But if I am the one scraping away the damaged wood, then building up the varnish coats, I remember to be more careful about where the far end of my boat hook swings.

At the same time, over the many years sailing together, Larry and I learned that everything on board except the solar panel and video cameras we carried could be repaired by one or the other of us. Our confidence in each other grew as our do-it-yourself approach taught us to work together and showed us just how far our own personal reserve of imagination, determination, or strength could stretch.

The people who take the time to learn sailing and all of the skills related to caring for their own boat become valuable additions to the cruising fleet. There is a worldwide shortage of skilled riggers, ship's carpenters, bosuns, refrigeration and engine mechanics, and sailmakers. So the self-sufficient sailor can be more confident of finding work as he cruises from country to country.

The pride you'll feel as your skills develop can't be easily described. The first time you sail your boat up to the dock so she stops within a foot of the cleats, the first hatch you build that doesn't leak a drop, the first repair job you successfully complete—each is a triumph that will bring a glow to your life. Eventually this self-sufficiency will grow to be a sport. You'll set new goals and reach them. Then someday there will be an ultimate test. I am convinced that to every person who goes to sea for long periods of time there comes at least one time when self-sufficiency will save life or boat.

Countless decisions made by confident, experienced sailors which seem small at the time may be vital in the last analysis. Simple but critical decisions become part of your daily rhythm. Decisions such as keeping a night watch and taking one extra walk around the deck to check things over, changing a shroud because it looks weak, rebuilding a through-hull fitting as a matter of routine, making a second check on your navigation, or moving to a slightly different anchorage because of some niggling doubt about the weather—all of which may never cause a ripple in your life. But should you *not* make these decisions with the knowledge gained by being self-sufficient, chain reactions might lead to grave consequences.

At times being self-sufficient is hard work. It's far easier to telephone your sailmaker and order a new genoa than it is to re-stitch all the seams on your tiny hand-operated sewing machine. It is easier to have the shipyard handle your haul-out while you simply write a check.

Meanwhile, not everyone will get it, this way of life. Friends will say, "Why didn't you hire so and so? He would have saved you hours of work."

Then as they watch you simplify your boat they'll call you backwards, prehistoric, a stick in the mud.

And finally, if things do go wrong, you have only yourself to blame.

The other side of this coin, and the fact every sailor learns sooner or later, is that when you let other people do your work, things still go wrong. In the final analysis it's you who is going out to sea. No shoreside mechanic or tradesman cares as much about your boat, or your life, as you do. So if your goal is a lifestyle and adventure that leaves you feeling in control and deeply satisfied, self-sufficiency is the answer.

About the Author



Lin and Larry Pardey voyaged more than 200,000 miles on boats ranging from 24 feet to more than 60 feet in length. Their seminars, books, and videos have encouraged thousands of potential voyagers to set sail. After 47 years of voyaging, Lin and Larry settled in a home base they built in New Zealand, where Lin cared for Larry as his health declined. Now, Lin has returned to the ocean sailing life she came to love as a young woman. In her seventh decade, she continues to embrace the adventure to new and life-affirming places.

Index

NOTE: Page references with an f are figures; page references with an n will be found in notes.

- abandon ship kit, [145–51](#)
- accidents (carelessness), [210–13](#)
- Adlard Coles Heavy Weather Sailing* (Bruce), [246n1](#)
- air circulation in wood boats, [205](#), [206f](#), [207](#)
- airflow, [212f](#). *see also* ventilation
- air travel, [42–43](#)
- AIS Vessel Tracking system, [85](#), [295](#)
- Alaska Eagle*, [261](#)
- anchors
 - bowers, [139](#)
 - CQR, [138](#)
 - in crowded spots, [73](#)
 - Danforth, [137](#)
 - drag-proof anchoring, [132–44](#)
 - dropping, [74](#)
 - lightweight, [137f](#)
 - mooring, [70f](#)
 - under sail, [72](#)
 - selecting, [136–41](#)

stockless, [138f](#)
Anderson, Mike, [194f](#), [200](#)
Argentina, [261](#). *see also* Cape Horn
[ariesvanegear.com](#), [200](#)
As Long as It's Fun! (McCormick), [258n3](#)
athwartships, [119](#)
Atom, [145](#)
auto-pilot. *see* self-steering systems

backing sails, [69](#)
Bailey, Maralyn, [146](#)
Bailey, Maurice, [146](#)
Baja California, [235](#), [241](#), [317](#)
Barrott, Litara, [264f](#), [265](#), [298](#), [299](#)
Barrott, Noel, [264f](#), [265](#), [298](#), [299](#)
battens, [182](#)
batteries, wet-cell battery tools, [112](#)
Beagle Canal, [257](#), [258](#), [259](#), [264](#), [266](#), [273](#), [298](#)
Beale, Ray, [306](#)
Bermuda, [104](#)
berths for crews, [29](#)
Big Blue, [292f](#)
bilge pumps, [178](#)
Bill Bailey, [246–50](#)
Bilsbarrow, George, [39](#)
Blake, Peter, [238n4](#)
blogging for income, [40](#)
Blyth, Chay, [266](#)
boats, [204–9](#). *see also* cruising; yachts
Bomoh, [27](#), [28](#), [30](#), [31](#), [32](#), [33](#), [33f](#), [34](#)
boots, [277](#)
bottom of boats, condition of, [67](#), [68f](#)
Bowen, Dan, [185](#)
bowsprits, headsails, [201–3](#)
Bruce, Peter, [246n1](#)

Bruynzeel mahogany, [208](#)
Bryns, Annie, [305](#), [306](#), [307](#), [308](#)
Bryns, Eben, [305](#), [306](#), [307](#), [308](#)
budgets, [57](#). *see also* costs; finances
bulwarks
 building, [126–29](#)
 installing wood, [129](#)
 safety features, [154](#)
 scuppers, [127](#), [128f](#)
 stanchions, [129f](#)
butane, [277](#)
Butler, Ashley, [270](#), [274](#)

Callahan, Steve, [147n1](#)
Canal Chacao, [281f](#)
canvas, [155](#), [156](#)
 companionway pram hood/hatch turtle, [274](#)
 Hiscock Canvas, [214–15](#)
 repair skills, [38](#)
Cape Hope, [254](#)
Cape Horn, [252–66](#), [253f](#), [259f](#), [260f](#), [298](#)
 equipment, [269](#), [277](#)
 Mar del Plata, Argentina, [268f](#), [272](#), [276](#)
 preparing for, [267–78](#)
 routes around, [263–66](#)
 Straits of Le Maire, [256](#), [257](#), [272](#), [273](#)
Cape Horn to Starboard (Kretschmer), [255](#)
Cape Leewin, [254](#)
The Cape of Storms, [254](#)
[capehorn.com](#), [200](#)
Capriccio, [219](#)
captains, delivering yachts, [45–46](#), [48](#), [49](#)
carbon monoxide, [210–13](#)
care and storage of tools, [113–14](#)
carelessness, [210–13](#), [211f](#)

- Carina*, [21](#), [159](#)
- carpentry tools, [109–10](#)
- Cartagena, Colombia, [234](#)
- chafe, mainsails, [183](#)
- chains, fairleads, [144](#)
- challenges of cruising, [227](#)
 - daily problems of, [228–32](#)
 - giving up (frustrations with cruising), [246–50](#)
 - over-planning cruises, [241–45](#)
 - pirates and thieves, [233–40](#)
- charter companies
 - depending on chartering, [36](#)
 - finding crews, [18](#)
 - jobs with, [21](#)
- charter yachts
 - crews on, [20](#), [21](#)
 - expenses, [36–37](#) (*see also* finances)
- charts, [283f](#), [284](#)
 - navigating, [81](#)
 - plotting, [162](#), [293](#)
- check valves, [179](#)
- Cheeky*, [147](#), [150](#)
- children, safety, [158](#), [159](#)
- Chile, [266](#), [267](#)
- Chilean Canals, [265](#), [279](#)
- clamps
 - G, [119](#)
 - hose, [178](#)
 - sheer, [205](#)
- clearance, rudders, [171f](#), [173](#)
- clew patches, [184](#)
- clubs, sailing, [17](#)
- CO2 (carbon dioxide), [213](#)
- Collins, Haven, [255](#)
- Collins, Monica, [255](#)
- collisions, [146](#), [295](#)

COLREGS, [85](#)

Columbia, [104](#)

The Commonsense of Yacht Design (Herreshoff), [137](#)

communication skills, [92](#)

compromise, [309–13](#)

computer skills, jobs, [39](#)

confetti, [278f](#)

contents, emergency abandon ship kit, [148–51](#)

contracts, delivering yachts, [49](#), [51](#)

control, rudder, [172f](#), [173](#)

cooks

 finding, [18](#)

 jobs, [39](#)

See also crews

Costa Rica, [158n2](#)

costs

 of cruising boats, [55](#), [56](#)

 defraying with crews, [33f](#)

 of delivering yachts, [46](#), [48](#)

 of maintenance, [56](#), [58](#), [59](#)

 of mooring, [60](#)

 for ocean-voyages, [30](#)

see also finances

CQR anchors, [138](#)

[crewbay.com](#), [17](#), [31](#)

crews, [16](#)

 berths, [29](#)

 on the *Bomoh*, [27](#), [28](#), [31](#)

 on charter yachts, [20](#), [21](#)

 defraying costs with, [33f](#)

 delivering yachts, [49](#)

 finding, [17](#), [18](#)

 jobs as, [18](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [38](#)

 joining as yachts, [24](#)

 mooring, [67](#)

 picking boat sizes, [57](#)

- pick-up, [28](#), [29](#), [34](#), [35](#)
- Pierhead Jumpers (PHJs), [21](#)
- Sahula*, [26](#), [27f](#)
- savings, [19](#)
- sea-trials, [22](#)
- vetting, [20](#)
- [crewseekers.net](#), [17](#)
- crews for ocean-voyages, [26–35](#)
- cruising, [107](#)
 - building bulwarks, [126–29](#)
 - challenges of (see challenges of cruising)
 - deviating from travel plans, [241–43](#)
 - drag-proof anchoring, [132–44](#)
 - finances, [36–44](#) (see also finances)
 - finding crews, [16](#), [17](#), [18](#)
 - friends made during, [99–106](#)
 - rudders for, [166–73](#)
 - safety, [152–59](#)
 - tools and spares for, [108–14](#)
- cruising boats
 - balancing, [192–94](#)
 - cost of, [55](#), [56](#)
 - length of, [55–64](#)
 - maintenance costs, [56](#), [58](#), [59](#)
 - resources, [62](#)
 - safety of, [59–60](#)
 - selecting, [161–62](#)
 - testing, [61](#)
 - see also yachts
- Cruising World* magazine, [17](#), [159](#)
- Crusader*, [150](#), [151](#)
- Crusader Sails, [180](#)
- currents, using to advantage, [81](#)
- cursing
 - learning, [162–63](#)
 - oar power, [115–25](#)

Cutty Sark, [204](#)
Cutty Sark Preservation Society, [204](#)

daily challenges of cruising, [228–32](#)

Danforth anchors, [137](#)

Darrell, Bert, [74](#)

day chartering, [37](#)

day-hops, [20](#)

day sailors, [310f](#), [311f](#)

dead reckoning (DR) position, [196](#)

deck showers, [174](#)

defensive anchoring, [133–34](#)

Defoe, Daniel, [285](#)

delivering yachts, [37–38](#), [45–54](#)

contracts, [49](#), [51](#)

costs of, [46](#), [48](#)

deliverers, [50–52](#)

inspections, [51](#), [52](#)

leaving boats to, [52–54](#)

owners, [45–50](#)

skills required for, [50](#), [51](#)

Delsamb, [95](#)

demand propane water heaters, [175](#)

dinghys

sculling, [125](#)

stem, [142](#)

doghouses, [153](#)

Dolphinite, [208](#)

dorade vents, [212f](#), [213](#), [280](#)

Dorthea, [146](#)

downhauls, jibs, [201–3](#)

drag-free anchoring, [132–44](#)

defensive anchoring, [133–34](#)

deployment, [141–44](#)

in hurricanes, [140f](#)

- knowledge of, [136](#)
- med mooring, [134–36](#)
- selecting anchors and rodes, [136–41](#)
- Drake Passage, [253f](#)
- drifters, [83f](#), [84](#), [292f](#)
- dry runs, [67](#), [73](#)
- Duke, Bob, [156](#)

- easy-to-remove-and-service outboard rudders, [171f](#), [173](#)
- Edward Sewell*, [272](#)
- electrical tools, [112](#)
- electricity
 - demand pressure systems, [176](#)
 - repairmen tools, [112](#)
 - 220/240-volt tools, [111](#)
- electronics, tools for, [112](#)
- Elvy, Michelle, [86n2](#), [93–94](#), [200](#)
- emergency abandon ship kits, [145–51](#), [148–51](#), [164](#)
- Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), [147](#), [150](#), [160](#)
- Enfield, Lee, [233](#)
- engines, [79](#)
 - maneuvering without, [66–78](#)
 - oar power, [115–25](#)
 - sailing with, [311](#)
 - sailing without relying on, [80](#)
 - tools for inboard, [111–12](#)
 - tools for sailboats (no engines), [111](#)
- equipment
 - Cape Horn, [269](#), [277](#)
 - emergency, [164](#)
 - foul weather gear, [277](#)
 - halyard holders, [217–18](#)
 - Hiscock canvas square, [214–15](#)
 - Port Sticks, [218–19](#)
 - rain catchers, [215–16](#)

- safety, [163–64](#)
- selecting, [163](#)
- two-part underwater putty, [216–17](#)

Facebook, Women Who Sail, [92n2](#)
fairleads, [141f](#), [143f](#), [144](#), [187f](#)
fair winds, [82](#)
falling overboard, [152](#)
Fastnet Race, [157](#)
Felicity, [310f](#), [311f](#)
Ferraresi, Galileo, [257](#)
fiberglass cloth, [114](#)
Field, Hale, [66](#)
filling sails, [69](#)
finances, [36–44](#)

- air travel, [42–43](#)
- Bomoh*, [33](#), [34](#)
- delivering yachts, [37–38](#)
- flexibility of, [43](#)
- Internet consulting, [42](#)
- maintaining yachts, [38](#)
- savings, [19](#)
- seasonal resorts, [38–39](#)
- sharing-expense arrangements, [24](#)
- wages for crewmembers, [18](#), [20](#), [21](#)
- writing, [40](#)
- see also* jobs

[findacrew.com](#), [31](#)
Findlay, Alexander George, [255](#)
Fiordland, [311](#)
first aid, [162](#)
fishermen, [100](#), [101](#)
flashlights, [85](#)
fog, [307](#)
Folkboats, [20](#), [118f](#)

food, [278](#)
 in abandon ship kits, [148](#)
 lockers, [63](#)
foul weather gear, [277](#)
frame heads, [206](#)
freedom chips, [36](#), [283](#)
Freehand Steering System, [194f](#)
fresh-water supplies, [174](#), [177](#)

galleys
 fresh-water supplies, [177](#)
 hot water, [177](#)
 sink clog-ups, [178n2](#)
galvanized fastenings, [114](#)
Galway Hookers, [243f](#)
garhauermarinehardware.co.nz, [200](#)
Gates, Bill, [285](#)
Gau, Jean, [145](#)
G clamps, [119](#)
Get Ready to Cruise video, [188n1](#)
Gifford, Behan, [159n3](#)
glue, wood, [209f](#)
Goodall, Natalie, [258f](#)
Goodlander, Gary (Captain Fatty), [164](#)
GPS (Global Positioning System), [293](#), [294](#), [295](#), [302n1](#)
Great Barrier Reef (Australia), [246](#)
Greer, Jay, [306](#)
ground tackle, [72](#), [155](#)
Gulf of Corcovado, [281f](#)
guns, [233–40](#)
gybing, [188](#)

Haigh, David, [26](#), [27f](#), [28](#), [29f](#), [30](#), [54n4](#)
halyards, [182](#), [187](#)
 holders, [217–18](#)

- jib downhauls, [202f](#)
- Hamlin, Fenton, [37](#)
- ham-radios, [150](#)
- handholds, [154](#)
- hanging-on habits, [157](#)
- hank-on sails, [269n1](#)
- hard dodgers, [213](#)
- harnesses
 - Fastnet Race, [157](#)
 - roughweather, [156](#), [157](#), [159](#)
- Harries, John, [36](#)
- Hasler Pendulum Servo gear, [197](#)
- headboards, [182](#), [182f](#)
- headsail dowsings, [201–3](#)
- health issues, [90](#)
- heaving, [80](#)
- heavy-weather harnesses, [152](#)
- heel fittings, [167](#), [171f](#), [173](#)
- hemlock, [208](#)
- Herreshoff, L. Francis, [137](#)
- Herreshoff, Nat, [136](#)
- Hess, Lyle, [147](#), [180](#)
- high deck structures, [153](#)
- Hilo, Hawaii, [288](#)
- Hiscock, Eric, [57](#), [82](#), [164](#), [214](#), [309](#)
- Hiscock, Susan, [57](#), [164](#), [214](#), [309](#)
- Hiscock Canvas, [214–15](#)
- Hiva Oa, [287](#)
- Horsley, Malcolm, [19](#)
- hose clamps, [178](#)
- hot water, [175](#), [177](#)
- Hoyt, Gary, [117](#)
- hurricanes
 - drag-free anchoring in, [140f](#)
 - Hurricane Boris, [293](#)
- [hydrovane.com](#), [200](#)

Hydrovane self-steering gear, [199](#)

idle wooden boats, [204–9](#)

inboard engines, tools for, [111–12](#)

inboard rudders, [170f](#)

incomes. *see* finances

income for charter yachts, [37](#)

inspections, [51](#), [52](#), [145](#)

instant cup-a-soups, [277](#)

instant whisker-spinnaker poles, [185–91](#)

Internet consulting, [42](#)

Isla Diego Ramirez, [265](#), [266](#)

Jakaranda, [223](#)

jibs

downhaul lines, [202f](#)

headsail dowsings, [201–3](#)

jobs

with charter companies, [21](#)

computer skills, [39](#)

cooks, [39](#)

for crew members, [18](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [38](#)

delivering yachts, [37–38](#), [45–50](#)

maintaining yachts, [38](#)

seasonal resorts, [38–39](#)

visas, [40](#)

ways to make income, [39–42](#)

Johnson, Sarah Dawn, [159n3](#)

Juan Fernandez Islands, [282f](#)

Kaufman, Charlotte, [92n2](#)

Kawau Boating Club (New Zealand), [26](#)

Kawau Island, New Zealand, [304](#), [309](#)

kerosene heaters, [211f](#)

Knysna, South Africa, [106f](#)

Kretschmer, John, [46n1](#), [164](#), [254](#), [255](#)

land

staying clear of, [81](#)

transports, [46](#)

language barriers, [105f](#)

lanyards, [122](#), [123f](#), [275f](#)

L'Arctique de Pytheas, [235](#)

Latitude 38 magazine, [17](#)

laundry, [228](#), [229](#), [230](#), [231](#), [232](#)

learn-to-sail courses, [89](#), [91](#)

LED strobe lights, [85](#)

Lees, Paul, [180](#)

Leonard, Beth, [164](#)

lessons learned cruising, [298–303](#)

building friendships, [302–3](#)

compromise, [309–13](#)

determination, [301–2](#)

doing nothing, [299–300](#)

passages, [299](#)

schedules, [302](#)

spontaneity, [300–301](#)

transitions, [304–8](#)

Letcher, John, [199](#)

lifeline stanchions, [128](#)

lightweight anchors, [137f](#)

light winds, [82](#)

lines

downhaul, [202f](#)

mooring, [69f](#), [72](#)

nylon line, [139](#)

three-strand, [74](#), [75](#), [76](#)

Little Wing, [194f](#)

logs, delivering yachts, [52](#)

Loran, [293n1](#)

Los Angeles Book Expo, [291](#)

[lovesail.com](#), [17](#)

Luccette, [146](#)

luffing sails, [69](#)

Luke, P.E., [136](#)

Magdalena, [204](#)

[mahina.com](#), [36](#)

mainsails, [155](#), [180–84](#), [277](#), [282f](#)

maintenance, [38](#), [165](#)

- accidents (carelessness), [210–13](#)

- care and storage of tools, [113–14](#)

- costs for cruising boats, [56](#), [58](#), [59](#)

- cruising mainsails, [180–84](#)

- equipment (*see* equipment)

- headsail dowsings, [201–3](#)

- idle wooden boats, [204–9](#)

- instant whisker-spinnaker poles, [185–91](#)

- plumbing, [174–79](#)

- rudders for cruising, [166–73](#)

- windvanes, [192–200](#)

- winter projects, [220–26](#)

Mallorca, Spain, [133](#)

Mar del Plata, Argentina, [256](#), [268f](#), [272](#), [276](#)

marine-grade void-free hardwood plywood, [208](#)

masthead sheave boxes, [286f](#)

McCormick, Herb, [258n3](#)

Mediterranean Moor, [76](#)

med mooring, [134–36](#)

mild steel, [114](#)

modern fin-and-skeg yacht, [167](#), [169f](#)

Molokeini, [103f](#)

money, [148](#). *see also* finances

Moonraker, [66](#)

mooring

- anchors, [70f](#)
- costs, [60](#)
- lines, [69f](#), [72](#)
- maneuvering without engines, [66](#), [67](#)
- permanent, [77f](#)
- [morganscloud.com](#), [36](#)
- Morse Code, [85](#)
- motors, tools for outboard, [111](#). *see also* engines
- murders, [235](#), [236](#)
- Mystic River Foundry, [118](#)

- Neal, Amanda, [36](#)
- Neal, John, [36](#)
- New Zealand, [32](#)
 - Kawau Boating Club, [26](#)
 - Yacht Masters Offshore Ticket, [23](#)
- No Name*, [176](#)
- non-skid decks, [154](#)
- Nuka Hiva, [287](#)
- Nuteboom, Pete, [219](#)
- nylon drifters, [292f](#)
- nylon line, [139](#)

- oarlocks, [119](#), [120](#)
- oars
 - power, [115–25](#)
 - sculling, [84](#)
 - selecting and rigging, [117–20](#)
 - sizes of, [115](#), [116f](#), [118](#)
 - see also* rowing; sculling
- O'Brian, Padraig, [242](#)
- Ocean Passages for the World*, [82](#), [284](#), [287](#)
- ocean-voyages
 - costs for, [30](#)
 - crews for, [26–35](#)

- offing, [79](#)
- offshore voyaging, [160–64](#)
- on-deck-at-sea safety, [153](#)
- 110-220 step-down, step-up converter (transformer), [110f](#)
- ongoing learning, [251](#)
 - Cape Horn, [252–66](#)
 - halfway point, [290–96](#)
 - lessons learned cruising, [298–303](#)
 - preparing for Cape Horn, [267–78](#)
 - schedules, [279–89](#)
- Opuia, New Zealand, [16](#)
- Oriental lanyard connection, [122](#), [123f](#)
- outboard motors, [84](#)
 - tools for, [111](#)
 - see also* engines
- outboard rudders, [167](#), [169f](#), [172f](#), [173](#), [193f](#)
- over-planning cruises, [241–45](#)
- owners, delivering yachts, [45–50](#)

- pacificboatdelivery.com.au, [46n1](#)
- Panama Canal Yacht Club, [55](#)
- paper plates, [277](#)
- Pardey, Lin, [97](#), [295](#)
- Parkinson's disease, [304](#), [310](#), [315](#)
- partnerships, [87](#)
 - communication skills, [92](#)
 - health issues, [90](#)
 - sharing abilities, [91](#)
 - surviving tough situations, [95–98](#)
 - teaching skills, [88–94](#)
- patches, mainsails, [184](#)
- pepper spray, [238](#)
- permanent mooring, [77f](#)
- personal security, [233–40](#)
- pick-up crews, [28](#), [29](#), [34](#), [35](#)

Pierhead Jumpers (PHJs), [21](#)
pilot charts, [284](#)
pirates, [233–40](#)
Piratical Pippet, [146](#)
plotting charts, [162](#), [293](#)
plumbing, [174–79](#)
plywood, [208](#)
Poland, [105f](#)
poles
 instant whisker-spinnaker, [185–91](#)
 Seraffyn, [186f](#)
 setting instant whisker, [189f](#)
port scoops, [225–26](#)
Port Sticks, [218–19](#)
Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival, [284](#)
power, [115–25](#). *see also* electricity
preparation, [131](#)
 drag-proof anchoring, [132–44](#)
 emergency abandon ship kit, [145–51](#)
 offshore voyaging, [160–64](#)
 staying on board, [152–59](#)
prevention of wood rot, [204–9](#)
Priestley, Charlie, [28f](#), [29f](#), [30](#)
Pringle, Rod, [23](#)
professional tools, [110–11](#), [112](#)
profits, [41](#)
 See also finances
Puerto Andraitx, Mallorca, [132](#)
Puerto Montt, Chile, [276](#)
Puerto Natales, [265](#)
pumps
 bilge, [178](#)
 water, [176](#)
Punta Corona lighthouse, [280](#)
putty, underwater, [216–17](#)
Pye, Peter, [66](#), [162](#)

quays, maneuvering, [71](#)

Quick, Richard, [272](#)

Rabicon, [91](#)

Raiatea, [300](#)

rain catchers, [215–16](#)

The Red Baron, [292f](#)

reef ties, [184](#)

references, delivering yachts, [47](#)

repairs, [38](#)

rescue, [160](#)

resin, [114](#)

resources, cruising boats, [62](#)

Rhodes Harbor, Greece, [135](#)

rigging, [38](#)

roach area, removing, [182](#)

Robe-Curry, Ralph, [27](#), [30](#), [31f](#)

Robinson, Michael, [159n3](#)

Robinson Crusoe (Defoe), [285](#)

rodes, selecting, [136–41](#)

Rodriguez Island, [301](#)

roller furling gear, [270](#)

Romadi, [185](#)

rot, preventing wood, [204–9](#)

Roth, Hal, [59](#), [60n1](#), [126](#), [217](#)

Roth, Margaret, [59](#), [60n1](#)

roughweather harnesses, [156](#), [157](#), [159](#)

Round Van Diemen Island Cruise (2019), [88](#)

rowing

 oar power, [115–25](#)

 positions, [121f](#), [122](#), [123](#)

 selecting and rigging oars, [117–20](#)

 strokes, [124f](#)

see also sculling

rowlocks, [118](#)

Royal Canadian Mounted Police, [238](#)

Royal Life Boat Society, [160](#)

Royal Yachting Association Yachtmaster's certificate, [23](#)

rubber gloves, [278](#)

rudders

for cruising, [166–73](#)

outboard, [111](#), [193f](#)

transom-hung, [194](#)

safety

children, [158](#), [159](#)

of cruising boats, [59–60](#)

equipment, [163–64](#)

heaving, [80](#)

offshore voyaging, [160–64](#)

staying on board, [152–59](#)

Sahula, [26](#), [27f](#), [28](#), [29f](#), [30](#), [54n4](#), [62n2](#), [63](#), [97](#), [102](#), [310](#), [312](#), [314](#)

sailboats

electrical tools, [112](#)

staysails, [292f](#)

tools for (no engines), [111](#)

sailcloth, [114](#), [183](#)

sailing and seamanship skills, [319](#)

basics of, [92](#), [160–61](#)

emergency equipment, [164](#)

equipment, [163](#)

learning cruising, [162–63](#)

maneuvering without engines, [66–78](#)

ongoing learning, [251](#) (*see also* ongoing learning)

safety equipment, [163–64](#)

sculling, [120–25](#)

selecting boats, [161–62](#)

teaching to partners, [88–94](#)

using sail power, [79–86](#)

women and, [88](#)

sailing clubs, [17](#)
Sailing Craft (Letcher), [199](#)
Sailing Directions for the Ethiopic or South Atlantic Ocean 1882, ninth edition (Findlay), [255](#)
[sailingnetworks.com](#), [17](#)
sailmaking, [38](#), [108–9](#)
[sailomat.com](#), [200](#)
sails
 hank-on, [269n1](#)
 mainsails, [155](#), [180–84](#), [277](#)
 repairing, [282f](#)
 staysails, [83f](#), [271f](#), [318](#)
 trysails, [273f](#), [277](#)
Salter, Peggy, [157](#), [158](#)
Santa Catarina, Brazil, [257](#)
[scanmarinternational.com](#), [200](#)
scarf joints, [120f](#)
schedules, [279–89](#), [302](#)
scoops
 port, [225–26](#)
 wind, [224–25](#)
scope, drag-free anchoring, [132](#), [134](#)
sculling
 classic sculling positions, [121](#), [122](#), [123](#)
 dinghys, [125](#)
 oar power, [115–25](#)
 scarf joints, [120f](#)
 selecting and rigging oars, [117–20](#)
 skills, [120–25](#)
 strokes, [124f](#)
sculling oars, [84](#)
scuppers, [127](#), [128f](#)
seacocks, [178](#)
Seamaster, [238n4](#)
seasonal resorts, [38–39](#)
sea-trials, [22](#), [306](#), [307](#)

security, [233–40](#)
self-confidence, [319](#)
self-defense, [233–40](#)
self-steering systems, [193f](#). *see also* windvanes
Selkirk, Alexander, [285](#)
Seraffyn, [43](#), [91](#), [315](#)
 abandoning ship, [146](#)
 bulwarks, [126](#)
 Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB), [147](#), [150](#)
 Hiscock Canvas, [214–15](#)
 instant whisker-spinnaker poles, [191](#)
 length of, [55](#), [61](#)
 mainsails, [180](#), [181f](#)
 oarlock sockets, [120](#)
 oars, [117](#)
 poles, [186f](#)
 Port Sticks, [219](#)
 sailing solo, [58](#)
 scuppers, [128](#)
 sea trials, [80](#)
 sketches of, [40](#)
 transom-hung rudders, [194](#)
setting instant whisker poles, [189f](#)
shade, sun covers for, [220–24](#)
shafts
 removal, [166](#), [167](#), [168f](#)
 wooden rudder, [170f](#)
sharing-expense arrangements, [24](#)
sheer clamps, [205](#)
shock cords, [127](#), [197](#)
shorthanded sailing, [201–3](#)
showers, [174](#), [175n1](#)
sightseeing, [20](#)
Simon, Alvah, [164](#)
Sina, [298](#)
single sailing, [201–3](#)

- sinks, [177](#), [178n2](#)
- sit-down tubs, [175](#)
- sitz-tubs, [231](#)
- Skeates, Nick, [40](#)
- skegs, [172f](#), [173](#)
 - modern fin-and-skeg yacht, [167](#), [169f](#)
 - rudders, [166](#)
- skippers
 - charter yachts, [20](#), [21](#)
 - crews for ocean-voyages, [26–35](#)
 - taking advantage of crews, [22](#)
 - vetting, [19](#)
 - on yachts, [22](#)
 - see also* captains
- Slater, Gillian, [245](#)
- Slater, Phil, [245](#)
- slipcovers, [226](#)
- Slocum, Joshua, [142](#)
- small boats, disadvantages of, [61](#)
- small heel fittings, [172f](#), [173](#)
- smartphones, [295](#)
- spares, [108–14](#)
- Sparksman & Stephens fin-and skeg 30-foot sloop, [197](#)
- Spray*, [143](#)
- spur tooth grommets, sewing, [184f](#)
- stanchions
 - bulwarks, [129f](#)
 - lifeline, [128](#)
- staying on board, [152–59](#)
- staysails, [83f](#), [187](#), [271f](#), [292f](#), [318](#)
- steering, [192](#)
 - Freehand Steering System, [194f](#)
 - self-steering systems, [193f](#)
 - see also* windvanes
- stem dinghys, [142](#)
- stockless anchors, [138f](#)

storage

lockers, [206](#)

Taleisin, [276](#)

storms, [95–98](#)

Storm Tactics Handbook (Pardey), [97](#)

Stormvogel, [19](#)

Straits of Le Maire (Cape Horn), [256](#), [257](#), [272](#), [273](#)

Straits of Magellan, [264](#), [265](#)

sun covers, [220–24](#)

superyachts, [24](#). *see also* yachts

tack patches, [184](#)

Taleisin, [42](#), [43](#), [57](#), [102](#), [104](#)

anchor bowers, [139](#)

anchors, [70f](#), [136](#)

bulwarks, [126](#), [127f](#)

Cape Horn, [252–66](#)

drifters/sails, [83f](#)

engine-free, [69](#)

guns and, [239](#)

halyard holders, [218](#)

hank-on sails, [269n1](#)

Hiscock Canvas, [215](#)

instant whisker-spinnaker poles, [191](#)

kerosene heaters, [211f](#)

length of, [55](#), [61](#)

mainsails, [181f](#)

oarlock sockets, [120](#)

oars, [117](#)

Port Sticks, [219](#)

sailing solo, [58](#)

sculling oars, [125f](#)

scuppers, [128](#)

self-steering systems, [200](#)

selling, [304](#), [305](#), [306](#)

- storage, [276](#)
- transom-hung rudders, [194](#)
- [taleisin.com](#), [308n1](#)
- Taleisin's Tales* (Pardey), [295](#)
- Tangvald, Peer, [117](#), [146](#), [164](#), [235](#)
- tanks, water, [176](#)
- Tavares, Ricardo Colares, [239n4](#)
- t. Baker, [288](#)
- Teflon, [195n1](#)
- thieves, [233–40](#)
- three-strand lines, [74](#), [75](#), [76](#)
- tides, using to advantage, [81](#)
- Tierra del Fuego, Argentinian, [256](#), [257](#), [264](#)
- tillers, [197](#)
- Tilman, Bill, [265](#)
- tools, [108–14](#)
 - 220/240-volt, [111](#)
 - care and storage of, [113–14](#)
 - carpentry, [109–10](#)
 - electrical repairmen, [112](#)
 - for inboard engines, [111–12](#)
 - for outboard motors, [111](#)
 - professional, [112](#)
 - for sailboats (no engines), [111](#)
 - sailmaking, [108–9](#)
- torches. *see* flashlights
- towing, [85](#)
- transformers, [110f.](#) *see also* electricity
- transitions, [304–8](#)
- transom-hung rudders, [194](#)
- transom stern, [193f](#)
- transports, land, [46.](#) *see also* delivering yachts
- Trenier, Arfie, [204](#)
- trim tab windvanes, [194–96](#)
- Trinidad Canal, [298](#)
- triple-stitched seams (mainsails), [183f](#)

trysails, [256f](#), [273f](#), [277](#)
tubs, [175](#)
two-part underwater putty, [216–17](#)
220/240-volt tools, [111](#)

underwater putty, [216–17](#)
US Coast Guard, [160](#)

vanes. *see* windvanes

vangs, adding, [190f](#)

ventilation

 carbon monoxide, [212f](#)

 wood boats, [205](#), [206f](#), [207](#)

Victoria Wooden Boat Festival, [288](#)

video making for income, [40](#)

vimeo.com/ondemand/getreadytocruise, [188n1](#)

visas, [40](#)

vlogging for income, [40](#)

volcanoes, [279–89](#)

Voyaging with Kids (Gifford/Robinson/Johnson), [159n3](#)

Wade, Darryl, [46n1](#)

wages for crewmembers, [18](#), [20](#), [21](#)

Wall, Ron, [40](#), [122](#)

Wanderer (III, IV, V), [57](#), [60](#), [82](#), [214](#)

warps, [72](#), [76](#)

water, [277](#)

 fresh-water supplies, [174](#)

 hot, [175](#)

 pumps, [176](#)

 tanks, [176](#)

 transfer, [176](#)

see also plumbing

Watts, Alan, [316](#)

weapons, [233–40](#)

weather, [280](#), [281](#), [302](#)ⁿ¹

around Cape Horn, [255](#)

balancing boats, [192–94](#)

Cape Horn, [260](#)^f

rain catchers, [215–16](#)

staying on board, [152–59](#)

trusting fishermen, [101](#)

trysails, [256](#)^f

[weatheronline.co.uk](#), [266](#)ⁿ⁴

web sites

[ariesvanegear.com](#), [200](#)

[capehorn.com](#), [200](#)

[crewbay.com](#), [17](#), [31](#)

[crewseekers.net](#), [17](#)

[findacrew.com](#), [31](#)

[garhauermarinehardware.co.nz](#), [200](#)

[hydrovane.com](#), [200](#)

[lovesail.com](#), [17](#)

[mahina.com](#), [36](#)

[morganscloud.com](#), [36](#)

[mysticriverfoundry.com](#), [118](#)

[pacificboatdelivery.com.au](#), [46](#)ⁿ¹

[peluke.com/marine-hardware/boat-anchors/](#), [136](#)

[sailingnetworks.com](#), [17](#)

[sailomat.com](#), [200](#)

[scanmarinternational.com](#), [200](#)

[taleisin.com](#), [308](#)ⁿ¹

[vimeo.com/ondemand/getreadytocruise](#), [188](#)ⁿ¹

[weatheronline.co.uk](#), [266](#)ⁿ⁴

[workonayacht.com](#), [25](#)

[wxmaps.org/pix/shemi.fcst](#), [266](#)ⁿ⁴

[yayablues.com](#), [46](#)ⁿ¹

wet-cell battery tools, [112](#)

whale encounters, [146](#)

Whisper, [60](#)ⁿ¹, [126](#)

winds

- fair/light, [82](#)
- speeds, [80](#)
- wind scoops, [224–25](#)
- windvanes, [192–200](#), [263f](#)
 - balancing boats, [192–94](#)
 - disadvantages of, [198](#)
 - installing, [199](#), [200](#)
 - limitations of, [197–98](#)
 - reliability of, [198–99](#)
 - testing, [196–97](#)
 - trim tab, [194–96](#)
- winter projects, [220–26](#)
 - port scoops, [225–26](#)
 - slipcovers, [226](#)
 - sun covers, [220–24](#)
 - wind scoops, [224–25](#)
- The Wisdom of Insecurity* (Watts), [316](#)
- Wollaston Islands, [265](#)
- women
 - Elvy, Michelle, [86n2](#), [93–94](#)
 - gybing, [188](#)
 - learn-to-sail courses, [89](#), [91](#)
 - sailing skills and, [88](#)
- Women Who Sail (Facebook), [92n2](#)
- wood, [114](#)
 - Bruynzeel mahogany, [208](#)
 - gluing, [209f](#)
 - hemlock, [208](#)
 - idle wooden boats, [204–9](#)
 - marine-grade void-free hardwood plywood, [208](#)
 - underwater putty, [216–17](#)
- wooden rudder shafts, [170f](#)
- wool hats, [277](#)
- [workonayacht.com](#), [25](#)
- writing for income, [40](#)
- WWVh radio, [284n1](#), [293](#)

wxmaps.org/pix/shemi.fcst, 266n4

Wylo, 40

yachts

- balancing, 192–94

- building bulwarks, 126–29

- delivering, 37–38, 45–54

- electrical tools for, 112

- joining as crew, 24

- length of, 55–64

- maintenance, 165 (*see also* maintenance)

- rudders for cruising, 166–73

- selecting, 161–62

- size of, 36–37

- skippers on, 22

- see also* cursing

Yates, Annabelle, 99, 100

Yates, Gordon, 99, 100

yayablues.com, 46n1

Zimbabwe, 104

Ziska, 270, 27

This book is a distillation of what Lin and Larry learned over more than 47 years of sailing. Together they have covered more than 200,000 miles on board their two cutters, *Seraffyn* and *Taleisin*, and on scores of other boats they delivered or raced. Lin and Larry tell how they have sailed in comfort and safety without large cash outlay, on a pay-as-you-earn-as-you-go plan. They share stories of people they met along the way, and experiences that shaped their lives afloat. They discuss the nuts and bolts of caring for your boat as well as lessons around navigation and travel in far-flung places. Above all else, they impart a feeling of all that is possible by simplifying.

The first two editions of this invaluable text have helped thousands of people who dreamed of setting sail, whether planning a weekend voyage or a circumnavigation. With the third edition, Lin continues to share knowledge gained in recent years—she takes us to new places, shares new experiences, and notes new equipment. And she does it with the same gentle spirit and enthusiasm for travel under sail. Armed with what she is learning as she explores the far corners of the Tasman Sea, she has extensively updated and revised the information from the original edition and added several new chapters. Balanced by chapters written by Larry nearly forty years ago, this edition also includes Lin's new and extensive discussion of the lessons learned as she and Larry safely negotiated the stormy waters around Cape Horn.

Whether you set off to explore your own nearby coastal islands or are planning a trip across the Pacific, this book could be the catalyst you need to cut the ties binding you to shore.

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